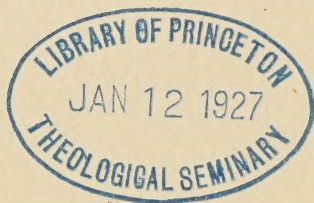


Our Parish in India



ISABEL BROWN ROSE



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OUR PARISH IN INDIA

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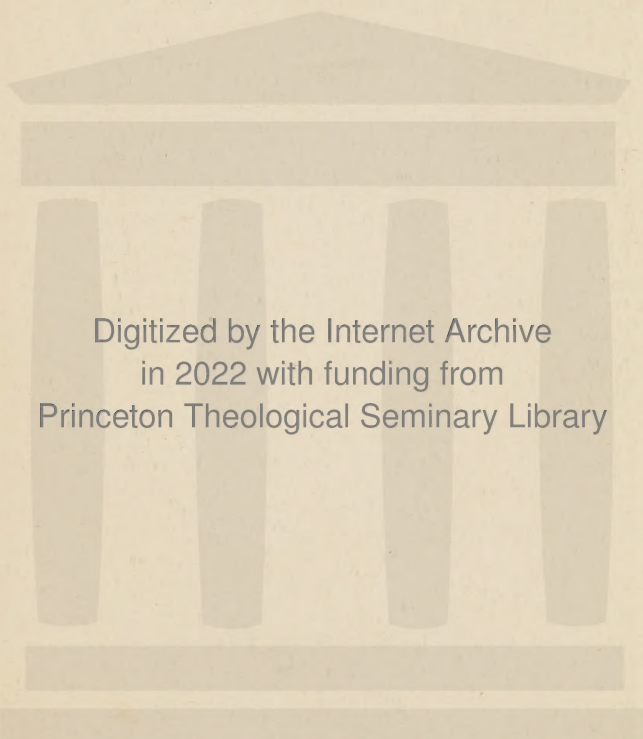
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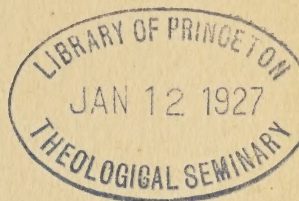
OUR PARISH IN INDIA

Lights and Shadows of Missionary Life

By

ISABEL BROWN ROSE

*Of the American Marathi Mission, Sholapur,
Bombay Presidency, India. Author of
"Red Blossoms," etc.*



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To
RICHARD
A Good Comrade and a Good Scout

FOREWORD

A COUPLE of missionaries, whom we shall call Rev. William Wilberforce and his wife Betty, lived for several years in a remote and conservative town in Western India which we shall call Barispoor. It seemed to me that their ups and downs, their adventures gay and grave and sometimes gruelling, showed a cross section of human life, and especially of missionary life of sufficient interest to justify its narration. I have, therefore, gathered together Betty's descriptions and allowed her to tell in her own words her simple, unvarnished story.

I. B. R.

Sholapur, India.

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I

OUR INDIAN "HOME SWEET HOME"

WHEN Bill and I turned in at the gate of our new domain we heaved a great sigh of relief, for things looked actually green.

We had travelled all night by train from Bombay, and in the early morning had changed to a dinky, little, light railway whose fussy engine swept us along at breakneck speed and accomplished the twenty-one miles from the junction in just over two hours. The dingy station was swarming with strangely-clad brown figures with unbeknown brown faces, out of which big, brown eyes looked us over curiously and made us feel that we must have tumbled out by mistake at some way-side halt in some other planet. We didn't seem to "belong."

But we had valiantly climbed into a rickety horse-tonga and had been recklessly hurled along an even road hedged with dusty prickly pear bushes, and then through ugly streets of ugly mud houses and ramshackle open shops. We had dodged stray bullocks and water buffaloes and herds of goats and swarms of sprawling babies.

With a fearful sinking somewhere in the region

of my entirely inexperienced heart, I had wondered whether our home would be in such surroundings and whether we must endure day and night the unlovely sights, sounds and smells now so much in evidence, to say nothing of the white dust and the glare. And then . . . a stretch of open road led to a substantial iron gate, and we swung into a big compound with refreshing green trees and shrubs, with brilliant flowers and bushes, and with a tinkling fountain playing in front of the bungalow!

I hope no one will imagine that a fountain in the garden is a *sine-qua-non* of missionary life—a wicked luxury demanded by us unreasonable and pampered exiles. It just happened that the Baris-poor bungalow was on the market because the Light Railway Company had moved its headquarters down to the junction. There was no rush for even this “desirable property” in a town boasting not a single white person; so the whole compound of two acres, with a good bungalow, a dozen one-roomed houses, a big well and numerous trees and bushes (to say nothing of the aforesaid fountain with four out of its six jets in working order) was knocked down for a mere song, and became the property of our Mission and an out-station for district work.

Our garden was a beautiful, restful place, and we loved it in its varied garb in the varied seasons of the year. In the fountain grew aquatic plants

including a white lily, and round about it were croton bushes, sisal plants, and neem trees. At the right was a short avenue of tall, graceful cork-trees. In the fall—that is, the end of the rainy season—they put forth their delicate, white, inverted blossoms, pendent like a bride's bouquet, and when a slight breeze shook them the fragrant petals would fall on us as though in benediction. A clump of stumpy banana palms had bunches of fruit that would change from an unripe bright green to a mellow yellow if we could protect them from the predations of both human and bird marauders. A solitary pomegranate bush boasted a few scarlet blossoms that quarrelled with the flaring purple bougainvillea beside it. The great spreading gold mohur trees put out their geranium-red blossoms and brightened the dry and colourless landscape in the hot weather, and their immense fern-like leaves and heavy seedpods made welcome patches of green all the year round. From July till October the arches of the verandah were covered with pink *antigonum*; and as it faded off there came clumps of white and pink cosmos, yellow and red cannas, multi-coloured zinnias, and a few *amaryllis*. There was also a silkworm-less mulberry tree and a bush of fragrant jasmine. We also tried a vegetable garden which was hardly an unqualified success but which gave us a great deal of fun and pleasure; and with imported seeds we managed from time to time to get a few peas,

beans, and heads of corn, some lettuce, radish and such-like.

The compound was a perfect paradise for birds. On a branch of the gold mohur tree that dipped towards the fountain, a perky kingfisher used to perch, motionless but alert for the metallic flash of an infinitesimal fish in the water below. Like a lightning flash of blue and brown he would suddenly swoop down and seize and gobble up his prey. Then he would shake the water out of his gaudy plumage, shake his beak contentedly, and fly up to his vantage point again with an air of smug complacency.

A pompous crow-pheasant used to wake us every morning with his stentorian trumpeting, and in a neighbouring compound a couple of peacocks would screech in token of coming rain. Then, as we sat out of doors at our "little breakfast" we would watch a dignified eagle take up his post on the topmost point of the tallest cork-tree and survey in the majesty of isolation the puny world beneath him. Green parakeets would flit restlessly among the trees, and now and again with a raucous chattering would suddenly take flight and sail off to some distant haunt with the sure, swift sweep of miniature monoplanes. Merry little gray bul-buls with black crests and with red spots under their tails built their nests in our antigonum. They would watch with scintillating eyes the movements of any two-legged intruders, and by their very

flutterings and sputterings would draw attention to the fact they were trying to hide. Black and white sparrows, crested hoopoes, cooing pigeons, chattering mynas, occasional woodpeckers, and numerous and varied butterflies, made our compound a gay and melodious spot.

The bungalow itself was a whitewashed, one-storeyed affair, as uninterestingly symmetrical as a doll's house, with one good-sized public room with a serving-room behind, and on each side of these, exactly one office, one bedroom, one dressing-room, and one bathroom. Even the builder had evidently been struck by the uninspiring proportions, for with a wild flight of imagination he had tried to relieve the squat appearance by adding a little wooden room on top of each front corner. The flat roof between these turrets made an excellent sleeping-porch, and was reached by a flight of steep stone steps back of the bungalow, and a rickety wooden gallery which gave us many a thrill.

We had but few guests in Barispoor for it was on the road to nowhere, and we missed the crowds of visitors passing through Bombay on their way either to or from the homeland. We appreciated it when good friends made a special journey to see us, and many a tired missionary came for a complete rest-cure. We once had a stranded Englishman—an agent for Singer's sewing machines—who had expected to put up at the 'Travellers'

Bungalow but had found it an unfurnished barn. He stayed for the week-end and was much interested in all that he saw. He was amazed that we could talk with the "natives" in their own language and that Bill actually preached in it!

We also entertained a distinguished American professor who came far out of his way to look up his old seminary student. To save him the fatigue of the Light Railway journey, Bill went down to the junction on Redbird, his motorcycle, secure in the possession of a new tyre from Bombay. But alas, the new tyre proved a snare and a delusion. Within five miles of home the butt-ended tube collapsed. It was mended and served for a couple of miles and then gave out hopelessly. The little toy-train swept past in triumph as Bill struggled with it by the roadside; and the distinguished professor, who was a good sport, cheerfully walked the remaining three miles while Redbird followed in humiliation later on in a bullock-cart.

Our guest-room saw some queer sights. It was used as a classroom for enquirers who, like Nicodemus of old, came for instruction "by night," fearing to come out openly. It sheltered a man fleeing for his life from his enraged relatives. Bolted and barricaded, it witnessed the performance of a clandestine wedding while the mob outside thirsted for the bridegroom's blood. Yes, isolated and lonely though we were, we never lacked thrills of one kind or another.

Barispoor itself is an extremely dirty, desolate and depressing town. Although there are weaving, spinning and ginning mills and other signs of Western civilization, the people are bigoted and unresponsive. Our Christian community was small, miserably poor and with practically no prestige among the townsfolk. At one time the Christians numbered exactly fifty-seven, and as each one of them was a distinct "variety" we conveniently called them our "Heinz"! Life in Barispoor itself was discouraging. Nowadays, I often marvel how I managed not only to settle down, but actually to enjoy life and keep busy and cheerful in that forlorn spot for four years. Was it the grace of God or merely the enthusiasm of a comparatively young and entirely new bride? A little of both, perhaps.

When, as frequently happened, Bill was suddenly called up to the district and I remained behind, I was not only the only white woman but the only white person in that town of twenty thousand inhabitants and for miles around. Fortunately I never had any nerves and never developed any, yet it seemed wise to take various precautions. I slept upstairs on the porch with a positive toy-shop under the pillow—a policeman's whistle, a Swiss cow-bell, a box of matches, and a bunch of keys. By my side, under the mosquito-net, reposed a hefty cane, and under the bed was chained my harmless puppy. The night watchman, an an-

cient man of peace, made occasional rounds, and the flicker of his lantern, the tap of his stick and his unnecessary cough—he wanted me to know he was on the job—were a real comfort, even though I felt sure that at the first sign of danger he would rush to his own little house and lock himself in!

But work in and around Barispoor was, I am glad to say, the lesser and the less important half of our job. Our real objective was the district, and we loved it. Oh, the joys of the open road; the lure of the great, wide, rolling prairie; the wind sweeping over the endless stretches of barren land; the long treks in the scorching sun by foot, by cycle, or on horseback with a peep of our temporary home, the little peaked roof of a 'Travellers' Bungalow, or a group of tents gleaming white through the trees!

Bill and I adored camp life. To leave Barispoor with its towny problems and its dirt and depression, and to start out on a month's tour in God's open air, was like setting off on a holiday. The days were strenuous but full of interest. We would visit around in the villages, encouraging our poor and needy Christian parishioners. We would search out promising youngsters to send to our Mission boarding schools to get a good chance in life. We would try to rouse the people to want a school in their village, and teach them "some better thing" than the worship of their little brass gods and goddesses, the stone images in the tem-

ples, and the red-painted stones by the wayside. The missionary can often save the weak from the oppressive hand of the strong, and he is always trying to raise the outcastes from their servitude and their appalling disabilities. In fact, he tries to make life just a little easier and brighter by introducing ideas of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and all the benefits they bring in their train.

It was a strange life—to live in the midst of a strange people trying to give them new lamps for old. Following a hard day out in the dirty villages we would relax, out-of-doors, after dinner, enjoying the refreshing and cooling night wind, looking up through the silhouettes of waving branches to the great starry heavens. From the nearest village—just distinguishable by pinpoints of light, came the reverberations of big drums beaten at some pseudo-holy festival. We often thought how little we knew or could ever know or guess, of the inner life of an Indian village. Here were we, strangers within the gates, with a different background, a different culture, different ideals and ambitions, a different outlook on life, death and the hereafter. How negligible was our impact on the stolid wall of immemorial custom and prejudice! And at times like those it was a comfort to remember that the destiny of India lay in mightier Hands than ours.

II

MISSIONARY HOUSEKEEPING

“**W**HAT-FOR pudding to-night, mem-sahib?”

“Oh, I don’t know, Krishna. What do you think?” Thus a weary memsahib so harassed with mission problems that she can’t scare up enough of a brain-wave to decide on anything so mundane as a pudding. There may be half a dozen brown folks—mostly suppliants—waiting on the verandah to waylay her. She may be due at her class in school in five minutes. She may be wrestling with ways and means to feed and clothe her family of eighty Indian boys. She may be working down through a pile of correspondence. Anyway, the problem of a pudding is just the last straw, so she gives it up, while visions of canned peaches and apricots and ice-cream sodas and maple nut sundaes float before her weary eyes like the delectable delicacies of an inaccessible paradise.

Krishna, standing by the desk, looks thoughtful for a minute. Then with a sudden inspiration he announces “Bo-manage.” And his memsahib gratefully agrees.

You would no doubt wonder what a “bo-manage” could be, but at dinner-time you would enjoy the delicious *blanc-mange*—one of Krishna’s specialties.

Krishna—bless him!—has been our guide, philosopher and friend, and incidentally our cook, for over seven years. He supplies spice not only to the food but to life in general, and he is as expert at serving up philosophy as fried cakes. When in doubt, call K—that has many times been our watchword. For, you see, Krishna is an imperturbable optimist. No matter what crisis, domestic or otherwise, sweeps into the daily routine, he is ready for it; and his wide, all-embracing smile is an immediate guarantee that everything will be all right. And it usually is, for he is also a *peptomist*—and *does things*.

Our beloved Krishna is a “boy” of about forty-five, and was (be ready for shock) a bigamist. For a Hindu there was nothing amiss in this. The “married” wife and her three children live with him, while the “other” wife and her boy were with her own people, sixty miles away. But this secondary wife died not long ago, so Krishna is now restored to respectability according to our standards and is a model paterfamilias. Though still outwardly a Hindu, he is one of the finest Christians we have had the good fortune to know, with a kindly spirit and a lovable disposition.

Krishna has shared many experiences with us—

heat and cold, hunger and thirst, tragedy and comedy. We have watched with him by the side of his only daughter, a child of three, dying of pneumonia. Together we have nursed influenza patients, and have stood by the funeral pyres of dead Hindu friends. Together we have chased obstreperous bullocks and buffaloes and have hunted wildcats out of the compound and have killed poisonous snakes and spiteful scorpions. Together we have tramped over rough roads and stony paths, through ploughed fields and dried watercourses. Together we have waded through swollen streams and have been drenched by torrential rains. Together we have hunted the hill antelope and have brought home the bacon. And at the end of a hard day's journey in the broiling heat of a tropical sun, Krishna's first effort would be a cup of tea for his tea-loving mistress.

With Krishna we have had many things in common, including the umbrella. Our supply of umbrellas ran out, but there was no society to be shocked by our unorthodoxy, so we all—the sahib and I and Krishna—used up my old parasols. Many a time did I chuckle to see my ancient and dilapidated blue and white silk sunshade wave above Krishna's white turban as he returned from the bazaar, protecting, not him, but his numerous purchases—meat and potatoes and bananas and eggs and vegetables all tied up in a towel. But at last the parasol got too shabby for his dignity, so

we gave him about a dollar to buy an umbrella, with the stipulation that if sahib or I were going anywhere in particular he would let us have the loan of it!

An Indian cook-room seldom looks spick-and-span. American housewives, accustomed to tiled kitchens and cabinets and porcelain sinks and nickel fittings and shiny aluminum ware, would squirm at the sight of the cook-room begrimed with smoke and adorned with more or less battered pots and pans. The usual apparatus is a series of brick fire-places built on a stone shelf about three feet from the ground. The oven is a strong iron pot upon whose lid hot coals are placed. The only fuel in our part of the country is wood. The cook sticks an immense log into the fire and pushes it farther and farther in as it burns away. He hates to light the fire, so he keeps it going all day, and your wood smoulders pleasantly away from morning till night whether a meal is being cooked or not.

Indian ideas of cleanliness are so delightfully irresponsible that even the best cook needs a watchful eye on him occasionally. In bachelor establishments terrible things have been known to happen, such as frying-pans being used for foot-baths and grimy hands for ladles. It was also a bachelor sahib who detected a quite peculiar flavour in his soup one night. He sent for his cook and asked what new seasoning he had used?

“Nothing new, sahib,” the cook assured him.

“Then what did you strain it through?”

“Through one of your socks, sahib.”

“Through one of my socks?” thundered the master in wrath.

“Please don’t be angry, sahib,” murmured the cook humbly. “I didn’t take one of your good socks. It was just an old, dirty one!”

Fortunately for us, our friend Krishna is *comparatively* extremely clean and is extremely expert in the culinary arts. His magic shows to best advantage in camp, where three stones steadied against a convenient tree form his impromptu kitchen range, by means of which he can produce a tempting dinner at the shortest notice. Imagine a black Indian night with a few stars feebly struggling to shine through the thick clouds. Here and there spots of light from the lanterns hung on the tent-poles show up the ghostly outlines of the white tents, and of the now empty carts that brought the equipment, and the bullocks grazing round or devouring the dried grain stalks put before them. Under a tree at a little distance squats Krishna, his kindly brown face lit up by the flickering glow from his little wood fire, while he stirs some mysterious mixture that will by and by become metamorphosed into first-class soup. Fuzzle, our canine philosopher, is nosing round in the region of the appetizing aroma and getting an occasional pat from his crony, Krishna. Village folks sit round watching all the queer apparatus and asking ea-

gerly about this strange white man and woman who have come to tell them about a new religion. Krishna discourses volubly on the Jesus-way, he being a real though unrecognized follower of it. Many a fine exposition have we heard him give to his Hindu visitors. And once, when we took a little Christian boy to help in camp we would hear Krishna the Hindu, every night before they went to sleep in their tent, prompting the little Christian in his devotions and joining with him in the Lord's Prayer.

Let me introduce my friend the *dhobie*, an elderly and dignified patriarch clad in immaculate white who will make an obeisance with the air of royalty.

He is most familiar to me in the attitude of squatting on the floor, counting out the e-shirts and the e-skirts and the e-socks and the e-stockings and other e-sundries, which he then ties up in an e-sheet. He steadies the enormous bundle on his head, makes his best salaam, and departs with majestic tread.

In a week or so (usually *or so*) he will return with the same clothes washed and starched and ironed and neatly folded—extremely neatly folded. Your æsthetic pleasure over the neatness of the folding will quickly evaporate when you discover that all the rents and frayed edges and buttonless buttonholes have been skilfully concealed within the folds, in the fond hope that they may escape

your eagle eye until the author of them is out of reach.

The *dhobie's* modus operandi accounts largely for the damage. He takes your washing to the nearest river or pool—balanced in two enormous bundles pannier-wise on either side of a wretched donkey or a bullock. Then he selects a nice, big, sharp stone. Wetting one or two items of clothing, he holds them firmly in his right hand, flings them high in the air, and then, with a dexterous twist of the wrist, brings them down squarely on the stone in the manner of a flail. This strenuous treatment combined with the acid in which he has soaked the clothes all night—though he always denies knowledge of any such thing—ensures snowy whiteness, but at horrible cost. Your linen wears to shreds in no time—but that is not the *dhobie's* affair!

There are two ruling passions in every *dhobie's* life, a passion for marking ink and a passion for buttons, these two passions being complementary to each other in that the one is constructive and the other destructive. Like an artist presented with a blank canvas and a new box of paints, he will attack with avidity every new article of attire that reaches him. No matter how carefully your linen is marked with embroidery or woven initials or what not, the *dhobie* sniffs at such delicate modes of discrimination and revels in placing his own really distinctive and unmistakable hiero-

glyphic upon it. As it is necessary that his mark should jump quickly to the eye, he naturally chooses the collar of a waist or the stiff front of a dress shirt or the initial corner of a handkerchief or some other equally prominent spot on which to imprint with loving emphasis his special cipher—in our case a sprawling cross. As he uses really indelible ink the mark may be depended upon to outlast the garment.

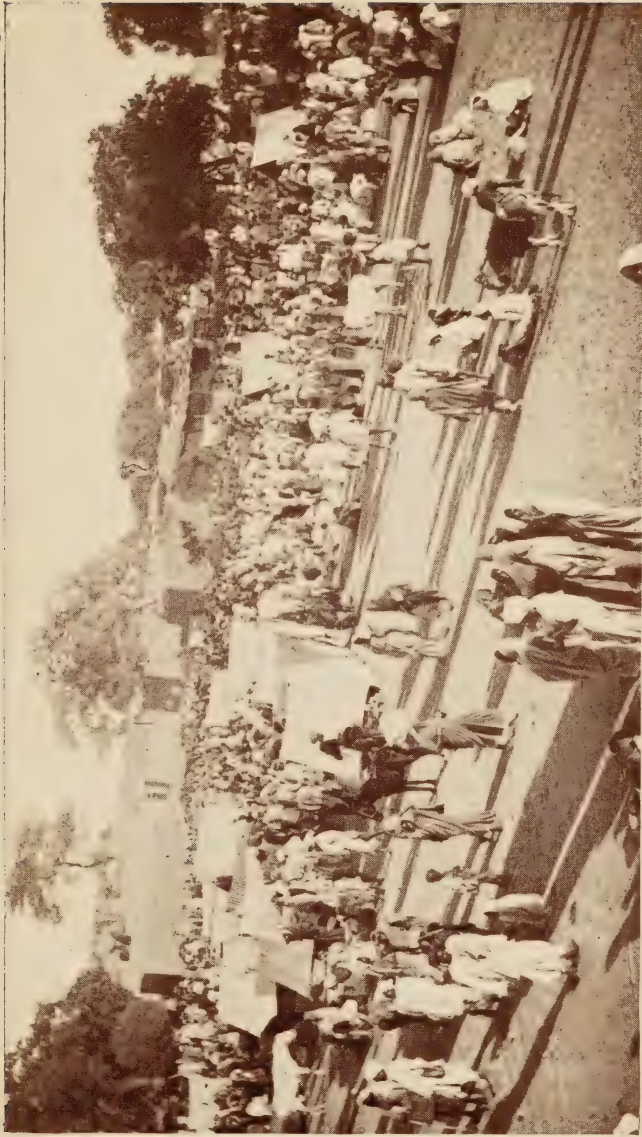
Buttons are ephemeral possessions when entrusted to the *dhobie*. Sometimes he considerably leaves you a small fragment to remind you of the pattern. Sometimes he leaves a goodly hole to show where the button once was, for the place thereof shall know it no more. Sometimes he even fetches the broken bits of button in proof that he has not stolen and sold it.

He has other means, too, of reminding you that your clothes have been at his slender mercies. He uses a large heavy iron filled with charcoal, as you can frequently tell by the small round holes burnt in the fabric. You may also find bright red stains from the betel-nut (the Indian equivalent for chewing gum) that he was munching as he worked. And at the time of the Holi—a most unholy festival—you may get your washing adorned with streaks of yellow and red and blue and green from the liquid powder that the merrymakers squirt at each other.

But the *dhobie* is such a gentleman that it is ex-

tremely difficult to reprimand him. You may cut his pay or threaten to get another *dhobie*, but he bears all recriminations with such an air of tolerant nobility as to leave the uncomfortable impression that buttons and rents and such-like trifles are entirely beneath his dignity even to discuss.

One year when plague was raging in our town we allowed the *dhobie* to occupy a small house in our compound, which was well away from the affected area. As he would otherwise have left the town temporarily, and thus inconvenienced us, he considered the favour all on our side, and such a mundane thing as house-rent was not even mentioned. One day on opening out a beautifully folded damask linen tablecloth, I discovered to my horror that it had been eaten through and through by rats. (Now perhaps you think that a poor missionary has no business having double damask linen tablecloths and that she therefore deserved their despoiling. But if she had got them as a wedding present from an aunt in Ireland, you wouldn't object to her using them, would you? And you would be entirely satisfied to know that she would probably never get any more, as the Irish aunt is, unfortunately, deceased!) Well, I sent for the *dhobie* and gave emphatic views on the crime and my own loss. He stood politely attentive and then assured me of his deep sorrow. But he informed me that when the rats had gnawed and ruined my tablecloth they had also gnawed and ruined his lit-



A VILLAGE BAZAAR TO WHICH PEOPLE COME, FROM MILES AROUND, ONCE A WEEK.

tle boy's cap—which was a greater loss to him, he being a poor man, than the tablecloth was to me. As it had happened in our compound and in a house we had given him, he was by no means responsible for the damage to my property. On the other hand, we were entirely responsible for his loss of a cap, and would I kindly give him a rupee immediately to buy a new one!

But one learns to put less and less value on the things which belong to this material world and which *dhobies* may rend in their enthusiasm; so you may keep all the electric washers and ironers that have taken the blueness out of blue Monday, but leave me my smiling brown rascal to do the family laundry for a few rupees a month.

We were sitting at our lonely breakfast in our lonely bungalow at the back of nowhere and miles from any other white person. The air was warm and still. Through the open door and windows we could catch a refreshing glimpse of green trees and bushes and a few gaudy flowers in the garden. In the thick pink antigonum covering the arches of the verandah there hovered a perky little gray and black bulbul, who would balance himself on a swinging branch of the vine and sway backwards and forwards, cocking his intelligent black eye at us to see if we were admiring him, and breaking out now and again into a twitter of optimism.

And round the table hovered Jummal, our

equally perky little Mohammedan butler, cocking his unintelligent black eye at us to see if we required anything. With his baggy white trousers and white coat, his hollow chest and round shoulders, his protruding chin, solemn brown face and enormous white turban, Jummal was an awe-inspiring sight. He might look expressionless but his mind was alert. He knew a few words of English which he vented as often as possible with inordinate pride, and he was eager to learn more. By putting two and two together Jummal could, like many other folks, reach amazing conclusions.

On this particular morning his wooden face all of a sudden relaxed into a look of profound sagacity, and he dashed from the room with a haste that made us gasp. He soon returned with a large bottle of honey from the pantry. He placed it triumphantly on the table in front of his master, withdrew to a respectful distance, and waited motionless but with an air of conscious virtue.

The head of the house and I looked at each other in amazement.

“Why, Jummal,” said I, “what is this?”

“Honey, memsahib.”

“Yes, but why have you brought it?”

“Sahib asking for honey, memsahib.”

The sahib strenuously denied any such thing, but Jummal, looking distressed but obstinate, insisted, “Please yes, memsahib, I say true. Sahib saying ‘honey.’”

Then it suddenly dawned on us. You see, we hadn't been married very long, and in the course of conversation there had slipped out a term of address—shall I call it?—occasionally used by American husbands!

Poor Jummal! He was a picture of wounded dignity as we laughed and chuckled and laughed again, but he felt better when we recovered sufficient presence of mind to explain that sahib had been referring to *another kind of honey!*

Jummal might have been with us for many a year, but during our vacation he got the offer of a magnificent job, magnificent not because of its princely salary of six dollars a month but because it involved only "sitting work." It is one of the ambitions of the East to sit while it works and still draw pay, and now Jummal is caretaker of a large empty bungalow where he has nothing to do but sit and smoke and eat and drink, and see that other folks do their work. What more could any one desire?

It was difficult to get any sort of a house-boy in that forlorn out-station, so Jummal had several unsatisfactory successors. I particularly remember Das, the big, curly-haired wretch with two thumbs on his right hand, two thumbs which used to appear so perilously near my agitated soup as he laid the plate before me that the soup forever lost its attraction. I could not help surmising that there might have been even greater propinquity before

it reached the table. Now, one thumb in the soup is bad enough and may sometimes be inevitable, but two thumbs. . . . No!

The *hamal* is a male housemaid who, in modest missionary establishments, is usually one and the same person as the butler. He will sweep out your rooms with a fan-shaped bunch of dried straws and will succeed admirably in elevating the dust from the carpet on to the chairs and other furniture, on to your clothes and on to any food that he happens to have left within reach. Then, what little dirt has escaped being deposited elsewhere he will draw into a corner, lift with his hands on to his brush held in a horizontal position, and then convey out to the garden or the rubbish pile, whichever happens to be the more convenient.

The *hamal* thinks it fussy to dust under instead of round, and to clean what would never be seen if you didn't poke into things. He would much prefer to do the dusting first, and, until trained into your queer foreign ways, would be quite likely to help himself to one of your best dish-towels or even a linen napkin to do it. To him all cloth is simply cloth, with no fine distinctions of damask and linen and cotton. A good layer of dish-towels has been known to serve as a raincoat on a wet night for an Indian house-boy making a dive from the bungalow to his little house at the back; and dusters with a large black or red check make excellent turbans.

The *hamal's* favourite job is cleaning knives, this being "sitting work." He will while away many pleasant hours squatting on the floor of the back verandah, gossiping with the other servants, talking philosophy, or merely dreaming day-dreams, while he polishes your steel knives to within an inch of their lives—and their handles. The aforementioned Jummal tried his hand on my best silver-plated knives, and after spoiling four of them he came to ask me why they wouldn't sharpen!

No, an Indian boy's ideas of efficiency and honesty and cleanliness hardly coincide with those of his white master. But to be able to live happily in the East one simply must learn the gentle art of letting things pass. Even the honest man expects to make his little commissions on all his purchases in the bazaar, and if you do him out of what he considers his legitimate and time-honoured right then he will take it out of you in some other way. The over-stingy mistress is the one who most frequently gets stung. Now I will admit that it is hard (at first!) to be vaguely aware that small leakages are going on and yet not make every effort to detect and stop them. The whole secret lies in learning to distinguish between honest and dishonest stealing! If you go against what is the custom of the country then you are banging your head against a stone wall and hurting yourself instead of the wall. Many a missionary, harassed with the constant problem of making impossible

ends meet, has worn herself and her family to a frazzle trying to cheat her servants out of their due perquisites—for that is how they look on it. *She* is the dishonest one, not they!

A missionary sahib whose cook was using too much firewood began to chop it himself each day and counted out a certain number of pieces. He succeeded in saving about two cents a day at the expenditure of an hour of precious missionary time, untold ounces of still more precious energy, and a fatal loss of prestige among his Indian friends.

A new memsahib, horrified at the thought of a self-sacrificing missionary of the Gospel indulging in the luxury of a cook, dispensed with one, did the cooking herself, and thus induced a nervous breakdown which necessitated her return to America. It hardly pays, you see.

It is horrid extravagance for us missionaries to get promoted to a hospital or a tombstone too early in the fight, so we learn to swallow with equanimity much that would make us balk at home in America, and we are profoundly thankful for our boys, with all their faults and failings.

Sometimes, at night, I glance across to the row of one-roomed houses that lie fifty yards or so back of the bungalow. I see little fires glowing, fires made of twigs and fuel-cakes and a few pieces of wood (quite probably *my* wood) where our boys are cooking their modest evening repast of flat meal bread and highly seasoned vegetables. I hear

them laugh as they sit round gossiping and chaffing each other. Especially do I notice our beloved Krishna's chuckle, for he is the funny man of the party. Now and again a familiar figure is silhouetted against the glow of the little fires. And a wave of amusement and gratitude rushes over me at the thought of our amazing good luck in having such a jolly and loyal bunch to help us, and I mentally throw up my hat with "Hooray for our Indian boys—bless 'em!"

III

FRIENDS AND FOES OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

“**S**AHIB, sahib! Quick, sahib! A snake in the drain!”

White under his brown skin, panting and puffing, the man stood trembling on our verandah. Fortunately the sahib happened to be in the bungalow, and seizing a stout iron pole he ran out to where an excited crowd had gathered both outside and inside the one-roomed house of an ancient Bible-woman, everybody shouting and trying to talk at once.

Now, each of those little houses has a low stone coping built round a square in the corner, where the people do their bathing and wash their pots and pans; where a drain leads through the wall to a runnel at the back. It transpired that the old lady had poured some water down her drain and had found it blocked—evidently by a snake, for she had heard a hissing noise. Bill poked his pole down and heard a distinct hiss; so he told the people to pour in copious water while he ran round to the mouth of the drain and waited. In a few minutes a snake emerged, fuming and fussing, his

hood spread out in anger a few inches below his head—a sure sign that this was a cobra, one of the deadliest snakes in India. Bill broke the reptile's back with one fell blow, but the loathsome creature continued to writhe in impotent fury until despatched properly. He measured over four feet, and his dried skin made a useful adjunct in furlough days and made many a bright-eyed white boy vow ardently (and, alas, temporarily!) to be a missionary.

In our flat, bare Deccan, snakes are not very common. It is in the jungle districts that one must keep one's eyes skinned; yet we saw quite enough of them for our comfort. I love India and nearly everything Indian, but I do not include snakes, except, perhaps, the fangless ones in the snake-charmer's basket. We often saw green grass-snakes. One night we heard a terrific screeching, and on running out with a lantern discovered a snake swallowing a toad holus-bolus. We killed the snake and rescued the toad, but I doubt whether he found life worth living after that experience. Another night we heard a similar noise and failed to locate it; in the morning we found a dead snake with the body of a toad showing through his stretched skin. Some animal had evidently killed him while he was handicapped by his over-full and undigested meal.

We, ourselves, had several narrow escapes—two of them dangerously so. One rainy night we had

climbed the wet, slippery steps to the roof, and hurried along the shaky wooden balcony at the end of the bungalow. I had been more hilarious than usual over Bill's outfit. With a greenish-black overcoat that had seen years of service at home and was now bursting at the seams, with striped pyjamas turned up to the knee, with an ancient pair of rubbers above his old dress slippers, with a Dietz lantern in one hand and in the other a dilapidated parasol which had once been a gaudy blue but was now a nondescript and well-ventilated gray, the Rev. William Wilberforce looked more like the comic figure in a pseudo-Eastern opera than an ordained missionary of the Gospel. My own get-up was equally ludicrous, but I shall modestly refrain from describing it.

Well, we had just reached the upper verandah and were about to make a dash for the covered-in porch where the beds had been drawn because of the rain, when I caught sight of a dark object on the ground. I seized the lantern, held it close, and discovered a snake coiled up on the very spot where my bed usually stood in fair weather. My hilarity instantly evaporated and other sensations took its place. Bill proceeded to business. We had neither stick nor weapon of any kind, and the fragile parasol would be literally a broken reed to lean upon for a life-and-death stunt. But by the greatest good luck some workmen had been up on the roof that day and, Indian fashion, had left a broken rafter

lying round. Bill seized this and pinned the quiescent snake behind his head. He grew lively then, but I held him down with the board while Bill stood on his head and squelched him. It was a creepy feeling, that of realizing that one step farther might have meant a horrible death. Below, the watchman appeared tardily and when we threw the snake down to him he pronounced it to be a poisonous one. We meant to verify this the next day but never got the opportunity; for he was eaten up by birds in the early morning.

A still more thrilling escape came later on. Bill had been called for in haste to settle some local trouble in one of our villages, and I had not meant to accompany him. But almost at the last moment, when the packing was practically done, I felt an inexplicable but quite irresistible impulse to go too.

We camped out at a 'Travellers' Bungalow in very bad repair, and while we were sitting at a scratch dinner one evening the rain came on and was soon pouring down through the leaky roof. When Bill got up to change our baggage over to the dry spots in the room, a new stream began to drip down on my neck, so I changed round to the chair in which he had been sitting. But now the water began to drop on and into our food, so we lifted the whole table and set it down in the one dry corner available. I was just about to sit down to dinner for the third time when I noticed

what seemed to be a shadow on the back of my chair. A closer inspection revealed a snake, its long, lithe body coiled round and round one of the wooden bars. Its head must have been within an inch, first of Bill's back and then of mine, and close to Bill's hand when he carried the chair over to its new position. I felt as cool as an ice-box while I called to Bill to come over and see the snake on my chair, and while it was being despatched with a hammer; but I was rather shaky after it was all over and we realized what a close call we had both had. When we told our friends in Barispoor about it, our old Bible-woman exclaimed, "Ah, mudumsahib, that explains why you suddenly felt you had to go. The good Lord knew that the sahib would need four eyes instead of two!"

Snakes are the most dangerous, but by no means the only objectionable specimens to be met in our part of India. Scorpions are a good second—mean, low-down beetle-like creatures that hide in dark corners or just a few inches beneath the surface of the ground, and are ready to shoot out their horned tail and sting any foot or hand that encroaches on their domain. Their sting is poisonous and extremely painful, though not often fatal except in the case of young children. Our poor Indian friends, sleeping on the mud floors of their dark little houses, were frequent victims, and we began to look on scorpions as a repulsive but effec-

tive mission agency, for people began to come to us for "scorpion medicine-water," and while we applied ammonia outside and inside, we often had the opportunity of telling them informally about our religion and our reason for coming to India. Our help in the matter of scorpion bites did a good deal to make the non-Christians friendly towards us and made us realize the inestimable good we could do with even a small dispensary. Caste people cannot take water from any person of a lower caste or of no caste—such as the missionary! But they have a dispensation that allows them to take "medicine-water." Even then, some caste people would hesitate about drinking any liquid we offered them. One day a young woman of good caste was brought to us in great agony resulting from a scorpion sting. When I brought her a cup of ammonia and water she refused it and asked for something to put *on* the wound—nothing to take internally. I assured her it was "medicine-water" but she was adamant. And then our little Mohammedan butler stepped out and pitched into her for being such a fool. "Don't you know," he demanded, "that the medicine-water cost three rupees a bottle? And here mudumsahib is offering it to you for nothing? Who ever heard of such a fool as to refuse three-rupees-a-bottle medicine-water? And you screaming with pain? Go on and drink it, you silly!" And whether it was the effect of the scolding or of my persuasions or of a

new twinge of pain I cannot tell, but she made a grimace and drank up the stuff.

But we had scorpions in the bungalow too; and as the paint on the doors and windows was exactly their shade of brown we had one side of the house painted white for greater safety. More than once a scorpion has fallen on my hand when I was closing a door, but in each case was so taken aback by his fall that he had not presence of mind to exercise his stinging privileges before I shook him off. Once I all but touched a horrid, big fellow curled up in my linen press, and another time in the bottom of an otherwise empty bowl which I took from a high shelf. And one day I found one in the folds of a white embroidered dress I was just about to put on. I threw the dress on the floor, stamped the brute to pulp, and then hollered to Bill to come and see the corpse in its white embroidered winding-sheet! I only once got actually stung (by a *scorpion*, I mean!)—when I put my hand on my hip and disturbed one that had evidently fallen from the roof of the tent we had just been putting up. He was not very big but he got me in the fleshy part between thumb and forefinger. The whole hand swelled up and was painful for hours, and I realized for the first time the full significance of Rehoboam's threat—"My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions!"

Lesser pests we had, of course, the smaller an-

noyances that cause discomfort rather than harm. Sand-flies, mosquitoes, bugs, red ants that nip with their pincers, white ants that eat through cloth and wood and mud and cardboard and reduce any perishable possessions to fragments—these we had and more, but the less said about them the better.

Of wild animals we saw little, for the Deccan is too open to shelter the larger and fiercer kinds. We have heard hyenas and seen wolves, and three days in succession a wildcat ran past our breakfast table with one of our chickens in his mouth. We often saw lovely big herds of hill-antelope grazing on the rolling plains of the district. It seemed a shame to bag such graceful creatures, but they do immense havoc to standing crops and the farmers often begged us to shoot them. Besides, they were a welcome addition to the larder in a region where no stores were to be had, so . . . several trophies on our floors and walls bear witness to Bill's prowess.

Of domestic animals by far the most important is the bullock, who is really our old friend in the pages of our childish picture-books—the zebu with his imposing dewlap. He, rather than the horse, is the friend of man in India. He draws the plough—very often a primitive affair such as Abraham must have used on the plains of Mamre. Alone or in pairs he draws heavy carts with the most varied loads—it may be bales of raw cotton for the mills, or huge piles of grain-stalks for fod-

der, or a laughing, gesticulating bunch of a dozen women and children off for a fair or festival. He drags the stone rollers when the road is being repaired. He draws water from the well by ambling down a slope and thus elevating a big leather bag full of water. Blindfolded, he plods round in a circle, pulling the huge pestle which grinds the oil out of the peanuts in a huge mortar. Patient, phlegmatic, resigned, he will saunter along the country roads, unguided by rope or whip, while his master lies blissfully asleep in the bottom of the cart.

The water-buffalo is about the ugliest and most ungainly animal in creation, heavy and unwieldy, slouching through life as though apologetic for its unlovely existence. Here is the best possible description of it, as it struck Sir Frederick Treves on his journey round the world: "A blue bare beast who may once have had both intelligence and hair, but who, on the loss of both, remained a dejected embodiment of the ugliness of stupidity and of the beastliness of life." An unkind legend also relates that when Adam had created all the necessary animals, Eve was allowed to try her unpractised hand—and the hideous buffalo was the result! But if the buffalo cannot be beautiful it is eminently useful. The male buffalo does every piece of work that the bullock does, and is often yoked with him for draught purposes, while his consort is a marvellous milk factory, producing

quarts and quarts of milk containing over eleven per cent. butter-fat.

The water-buffalo is entirely distinct from the American buffalo that figures in the Wild West, but is sometimes confused with it. A friend of ours had sent a cheque for a wedding present and when we told her we had bought a buffalo with the money, she wrote back in amazement and asked if we were setting up a menagerie! It is well named the water-buffalo. You cannot understand the meaning of the verb "wallow" until or unless you have seen a herd of these "blue, bare beasts" wallowing in a pool of water and mud, with just the tips of their horns and their noses in sight. You especially appreciate it if you happen to be hot and tired, yet prevented by unreasonable convention from following their example.

A rich merchant in Barispoor possessed three dromedaries. We used to watch them swing majestically along the road in front of the bungalow—nonchalant, superior, imperturbable. But one day one of them *was* perturbed, and so was I! I met him as I was cycling home. His driver had left him to stalk on alone, and he had strolled over to the wrong side of the road. He was startled by the figure of a white woman on wheels directly in front of him, so he balked. To avoid him I made a wide sweep to my right, and simultaneously he did the same to his left, with the result that we all but collided; and I scooted along just

a few inches below his enquiring nose, to his consternation, my own alarm, and the amusement of a crowd of pedestrians.

Our own immediate family had the merit of at least sounding distinguished. Being cut off from social amenities we determined to bestow classy names on the members of our household and compound, and so make believe that we hobnobbed with famous personages. The bullock was therefore named "Cæsar," this being a dynastic name, so to speak, applicable to any bullock we happened to have at the time. The first Cæsar, unlike his illustrious ancestor, developed a weak-kneed policy and would occasionally kneel down on the road and remain in this pious but useless attitude for an indefinite time. As only part of his purchase price had been paid, we exchanged him for a more normal specimen. Other Cæsars followed, all of them exceedingly useful in drawing our cart when it went to market, or to bring drinking water from the sweet well a mile away, or when it went on an evangelistic tour in the villages.

The water-buffalo, stately and dignified, was dubbed "Cleopatra" and her little son "Mark Antony." The relationship was not historically correct, but the juxtaposition of the names sounded familiar.

We also had a small pet deer of whom Bill was inordinately fond, and of whom our puppy was inordinately jealous. Fortunately, perhaps, for our



THE WATER-BUFFALO IS A MARVELLOUS MILK-FACTORY; AND HER MILK CONTAINS ELEVEN PER CENT BUTTER FAT.

domestic felicity, the little pet succumbed to some infantile ailment and was buried under the lone pomegranate bush.

And last but not least comes our adorable puppy "Pharaoh," a nondescript white and brown quadruped, probably nine-tenths terrier and one-tenth just unlabelled "dog," with a stumpy brown tail curled tight over on itself like a little pig's. The fuzzy-wuzzy hair on his ears soon made his name degenerate into "Fuzzle," much to the amazement of our Mohammedan friends, who informed us that "Fuzl" meant "graceful." But Fuzzle he will remain to the end of the chapter, and the end is not yet; for Fuzzle, toothless but spry, continues to bless us, and has fits of activity in which he puts up a good bluff that he is still an irresponsible puppy.

Out there in Barispoor he was my guide and comfort in many a hard place, and a lonely life would have been still lonelier without his canine companionship. And if ever an animal had human traits, that animal was Fuzzle. I learned a great deal of interesting psychology through my little four-footed friend. Once he was stung badly by a scorpion when we were far from home and from ammonia. He held up his paw and moaned, and looked at me with reproachful eyes. He bit me when I tried to sympathize with him, but finally quieted down and lay on an old waterproof. We found afterwards that he had chewed it through

in his agony. When we got him home we found he was paralyzed. Ammonia did little good, for the poison was all through his system. During the night I discovered that he was stiffened and almost cold. In defiance of all rules of hygiene I took him into bed and kept him warm. Next morning he was alive but unable to move, and I hated to see Bill go off to a village for the day, for I felt sure Fuzzle would be dead before he got back. In the evening I set off for church and bade my doggie a rather mournful farewell, for it seemed heartless to leave him lying helpless.

Just at that moment Bill came back and gave his usual halloo.

I met him on the verandah and told him in lugubrious fashion how far through Fuzzle was, and how hopeless it seemed. And then! . . . we heard a noise, and if Fuzzle himself didn't appear—shaky and weak and wobbly, but with his stumpy tail wagging to beat the band as he jumped up on Bill and gave him his usual fervid greeting. It must have been "His Master's Voice" that did the trick and supplied the necessary stimulus. And once up and walking, Fuzzle simply did not have the effrontery to lie down and malingere again. With a sly and yet shamefaced glance round at me now and again he cheerfully trotted in front of me to church, to the astonishment of our Christians who had seen him lying evidently on the point of death ten minutes before.

IV

THE DAILY ROUND, THE UNCOMMON TASK

ONE scorching day away back a generation ago, a tall, muscular man named Ramji was trudging wearily along the dusty road. The little pack on his head contained only a couple of flat breads and a change of clothes, but it seemed to get heavier at every step, for he had tramped forty-two miles from home. He sighed with relief when a bend in the road showed him a long, straggling town stretched out in front of him, for it was the headquarters of the district and his immediate goal, he having been summoned in by the Collector to discuss the matter of a field.

Ramji stopped at a little pool by the wayside, scooped up the water and gulped it down ecstatically, and then bathed hands and face and feet and changed his clothes. He asked some passers-by where the Collector sahib lived, and was directed to a large white bungalow. He squatted on the verandah and asked a servant if he might see the sahib. Out came a white man with a friendly face.

“Salaam, Maharaj,” said Ramji, bowing low at his feet. “I have come in answer to your summons.”

“What summons?”

Ramji explained, and the white man smiled. "I see," he said, "you have mistaken the bungalow. The Collector lives over there," and he indicated a big, walled-in enclosure. "I'm a missionary, come to tell you people about a God of love and a religion of brotherhood." And Ramji listened open-mouthed to strange ideas that were absolutely revolutionary to him. Then the missionary-sahib gave him a few little books to read later on, and sent a servant to direct him safely to the Collector's bungalow.

When Ramji had finished his business with the Government and was on his way home to his village six miles from Barispoor, he pondered continually on his recent experiences, and especially on the white sahib who had treated him—a despised outcaste—with as much courtesy and consideration as if he had been a twice-born Brahman or another white man. Later on he read his little books, especially one entitled *The True Way*, and he found that the missionary had simply been obeying the commands of an unseen Master and God who looked on high and low alike as His children. And he was convinced that he had found the medicine that would turn badness to goodness and keep a man good.

And some years later a happy day came when Ramji and his wife and their children were baptised by the white sahib and became the first followers of Christ in all that vast region.

But in the meantime it so happened that about fifty miles from Ramji's home there lived a notorious gang of Mangs who had pillaged and murdered their neighbours for years with impunity, and had always managed to elude the half-hearted vigilance of the police. But one day Mesoba, their leader, was trapped and sentenced to three years' imprisonment by the Judge of the District—who happened to be Meadows Taylor, the famous Indian historian. During his confinement, Mesoba learned to read—an unusual accomplishment for an outcaste in those days.

On his way home, after serving his time, Mesoba stopped off at his friend Ramji's village, and learned to his amazement of the divine elixir that could transmute a criminal into a virtuous man. He was evidently somewhat subdued by his prison experience, for he wondered rather pathetically whether this medicine would be potent to change his own life. He asked the loan of *The True Way*, and studied it deeply. His old accomplices who had been fully expecting—perhaps hoping—that he would immediately embark on a new career of crime, were astounded at his mildness, forbearance and piety. What is more, they, in their turn, "got religion," and they got it so badly that the village which had been the scourge of the neighbourhood became a centre of Christian influence. Those who had terrorized both friends and foes now invited them to join each evening in the group

that listened to Mesoba reading *The True Way*, for as yet neither Bible nor hymn-book had been seen.

Some years later, a missionary stumbled on to this group of self-made Christians. The transformed Mesoba became the pastor and an ardent evangelist, and he died full of years and honour. The light that he kindled in his disreputable village spread through the district, so that now, fifty years later, there is a respectable and self-respecting Christian community of Mangs—our parishioners and friends!

Barispoor, itself, is in British Territory, but the surrounding district is almost entirely in a Native State. We were actually in a tract of twenty thousand square miles with a population of two and a half million, where we were the only white people, where there was not one qualified doctor or one organized hospital, and where, when the gaunt figures of Famine and Disease stalked through the land, the people simply lay down and turned their faces to the wall and expected to die.

From this huge stretch of untouched territory we cut off a tract of about sixty miles up the Light Railway line—in fact, to its terminus, and about ten miles on either side of it. This included the cluster of villages where, thanks to the life and work of Ramji and Mesoba, there were four hundred Christians, and we considered this our immediate parish. But even in this comparatively tiny

section of twelve hundred square miles we felt our efforts ridiculously puny and insignificant. It was like baling out a leaky ocean liner with a teaspoon!

One of the hardest things in a hard situation was the want of medical knowledge. Wherever we went, crowds would gather immediately—the blind, the lame, the sick, just as they gathered two thousand years ago round the Great Healer. The mere fact that a white man and woman had visited their village raised false hopes that every ill would be cured. Nothing hurt or depressed us more than the sight of afflicted ones who tottered towards us with just a glimmer of hope on their unhappy faces and who went away again unhelped. We often wondered rebelliously what was the use of Bill's elaborate training in theology if he had to spend his life among poor sufferers who needed their bodies cured before they could be interested in their souls' welfare? It seemed preposterous to try and teach a new religion to people whose bodies were racked with pain. Yet we got miraculous "cures" by means of quinine, cough mixture, and a few simple salves and ointments; and we determined to devote part of our furlough to the acquisition of a little more knowledge.

And now let us go off for a tour of our outlying parish. Our equipment is simple—a couple of tents, cots, tables, and chairs; a basket of cooking vessels and camp dishes; a trunk of stores; our

beloved Krishna, our cook and friend; a handy man to help with the tent and the animals; and lastly, our puppy and our victrola. These last two are extremely valuable mission agents. Fuzzle will rush out of the tent and greet any chance passer-by. At first his overtures may be misunderstood, for the average Indian knows no dog but the fierce pariah variety used to protect the villages; but Fuzzle will wag his tail and positively invite the stranger to come and have a talk with the sahib. And Fuzzle's art of begging by sitting upright and wagging his forepaws is a tremendous draw, and makes rows of bright-faced urchins positively hug themselves.

The victrola is a novelty, and wherever its strains are heard we can be sure of a miscellaneous crowd; for even in a seemingly empty horizon in India, and at any hour of the day or night, one can always get a crowd from nowhere if one makes an enticing noise.

We take the help of the railway as far as possible and then set out on our cycles for some shady spot under a spreading banyan or mango tree where our tents are already pitched. This we make a centre for visiting round in the near-by villages, and sometimes our days are full though we do not move from our camping-ground. As soon as day breaks our visitors begin, and there is seldom a minute throughout the day when we are left in peace. Some folks are merely curious and come

to stare, others come to be friendly, but the great majority want help of some kind or another.

Here, for instance, comes a big, burly man trembling with fear. He is a Christian, a night-watchman in the nearest village, and we have known him for years to be an honest man. But a rich merchant has had his house broken into and has lost boxes of jewellery and silk garments and cash. Shunker is at once suspected, partly because he is the watchman, partly because he is a Christian, and partly because it is the custom of the corrupt police system to seize somebody quickly in order to show that they are on their job. Shunker had protested his innocence, so they tried to bring him to reason by torture. He shows his swollen finger-joints which had been bent back until they cracked; and he knows that worse is in store for him. Bill, of course, decides to deal with the said police, but he has no weapon but moral force, for in this Native State justice is all mixed up with bribery and "palm-oiling." We may threaten to go to headquarters and lodge a complaint, but everybody knows that it will take months to get a hearing; and it is surprising how many false witnesses can be trumped up in one day, to say nothing of several months. As a matter of fact, Bill's moral force usually works, for he has carried some shameful cases of injustice right through the courts, has been instrumental in getting more than

one corrupt and cruel police officer transferred, and has been the means of restoring much property wrongly appropriated. Shunker, therefore, loses his terrified expression and brightens up when Bill promises to go over to the village with him in the afternoon.

Now here sits a Hindu man, waiting his turn. He claims our protection because his uncle is a Christian. He too had been tortured by the police—hung up on a tree *by his thumbs!* He promises that if the sahib will get justice for him he, himself, and at least three relatives will be baptised. Bill explains that we don't want baptisms with a motive, but that in the cause of right he will look into his case.

Here comes a Hindu woman, vocal from afar, wailing and beating her breast. She falls at our feet and embraces and kisses our shoes and demands her child. It transpires that she is the concubine of a ne'er-do-well Christian who, in a fit of temper, had carried off the baby. The said paterfamilias now appears, accompanied by his little Christian wife and *her* baby, and we feel quite à la Solomon when we are confronted by the two weeping women and the yelling babies. The man is a stubborn, sullen fellow who declares that if he can't keep both "wives" he will turn Hindu and marry as many wives as he likes—at which the little Christian wife breaks into terrified screaming and grovels at his feet. We talk for a

long time and seem to get nowhere, so we defer judgment—a plan that often works wonders. And in this case it certainly did. In a short while the man came back, smiling and pleased with himself, to say that he was going to turn over a new leaf and be good to his “married” wife.

“But what provision will you make for the ‘other’ wife?”

“Oh, that’s easy. I’ll see that she marries a Hindu widower!”

And so everything is settled to everybody’s satisfaction, and we don’t feel as if we had had much part in the solution. We simply have to console ourselves by remembering that we are in India!

Here again is a Hindu farmer, a Maratha. He says a valuable field was taken away from him by fraud. He has made a case of it, and it is to come up shortly at the headquarters of the district. He wants Bill to write a letter in his favour! Bill explains that he can’t possibly do that until he hears both sides of the case, so the man goes off to fetch some unbiassed (!) witnesses. (I shall anticipate events by mentioning that Bill was convinced of the man’s honesty and went twice to the courts to help him, with the result that his field was restored to him, and the whole countryside went wild with excitement because this white missionary was evidently going to help the oppressed and deliver them from the hand of the oppressor.)

A ragged woman with six emaciated children

has been sitting on the edge of the crowd and she now comes forward with her tale of woe. She is the Leah in the family, and she and her children are actually starving in these hard times, while the Rachel and her children are well fed. She wants help to go to her brother in a town many miles away, where she will get work in the mills and be able to support her children. We promise to try and bring the obstreperous husband to task, and if he fails to play up, will help her to find work. This means incidentally that we shall have to pay railway fares and clothing—but it's all in the day's work!

By far the favourite hour of the day, both for us and for the people we have come to visit, is from eight till nine in the evenings, or rather, from eight o'clock as far into the night as we can keep our eyes open. It is the only time when the people are supposed to be free; for the cold weather—the only time for camping out—happens to be their busy season, with cotton-picking, peanut-gathering, the flax harvest, and the winter ploughing. We have a welcome in both the caste and the outcaste quarters of the village, though naturally we spend most of our time with the Christians. We sit out in the open on a string cot covered by a dirty (and usually lively) blanket which some one has been kind enough to fetch out for us. We must not offend by refusing his hospi-

tality. On cold nights a fire will be lit, and its flicker will light up the faces of the rows and rows of Indians squatted round it. Pariah dogs will prowl round the company and sometimes challenge the singing or the victrola music, and then they will be chased off with stones.

We begin with a lively record and the crowd soon gathers. By far the favourites in our repertory are "The Mocking Bird" and "The Whistler and His Dog." It is fearfully entertaining to watch the faces of those who are hearing the "sounding-box" for the first time. Startled surprise is followed by consternation, and then by a pleased smile, and then a chuckle and finally a burst of laughter. And oh, the delight, the rapture of the youngsters, when the "bird" trills inside the box! They will often creep forward on all fours to get a peep of him. And when the "whistler" whistles for his dog, our Fuzzle will run forward and cock his ears, and our audience will rock with laughter. I often think it would be worth while to come and cheer up those grey lives with the victrola, even if we did not get in any religion! But we *do* get in the religious part of it. The music is only an introduction, like the negro boosters who stand outside a show and attract you to what is inside. We proceed with lots of singing and some simple addresses, and an invitation to all and every one to come and see us some day at camp. And then we tramp or cycle back to our

tents, and try to get a few hours' sleep under the wide and starry tropical sky before a new day dawns, with its new but always multifarious problems.

V

MISSIONARY MOVIES

THE Rev. William Wilberforce had the honour of being nominated by the Government to become a member of the Barispor Municipal Council which consisted of eighteen members—six nominated by the Government and twelve elected by popular vote. The work involved did not take up a great deal of time, and it brought him in touch with the non-Christian leaders of the town. Every meeting of the Council was a revelation in Indian psychology, and he probably learned more in that way than he could have done from years of book study.

His first discovery was that the majority of the elected members were there from no sense of public duty but because they had some axe to grind, either a private axe or the axe of their caste and community. The Brahmans would vote *en bloc* for their interests, the Mohammedans for theirs, and the Wanis (merchants) for theirs, and would sit more or less stolid and indifferent when any measure was being discussed that had no direct bearing on their affairs. Of course, such a thing has been known to happen in countries that have

more political experience than India! But here, there was not even an attempt at camouflage.

The Collector of the District, on his annual tour, took exception to the number and size of verandahs and unauthorized booths projecting from shop-fronts on the main streets and thus reducing the width of the same to dangerously narrow proportions. He ordered that a limit be set and a tax levied on such encroachments. Now, there were several wealthy tradesmen on the Council who would be affected; so they drew up a proposal that the taxes on various streets should vary, and so worked it out that on the streets where they had their shops the encroachment tax was light—almost negligible, whereas on the streets of the small tradespeople it was exceedingly heavy! And in spite of the protest of the missionary-sahib, this was put to the vote and passed!

Election time in Barispor, as in other parts of the world, was distinguished by a lot of ill-feeling and a lot of political and personal mud-throwing, and the results were often challenged. Many of the electors being illiterate, the mode of voting was to erect large and highly-coloured portraits of the candidates, with a box beneath each. Into this box the voter would drop a marble which automatically rang a bell, thus warning those in charge of the booths that a vote had been registered—and not more than one! Well, at one election, one of the candidates won by only one vote—*i. e.*, marble,

and his political opponents got up the cry that there had been cheating, and that the successful candidate's supporters had been seen to drop an extra marble into his box! They came to the sahib and begged him to demand an investigation. Hearing this, the other side hastened to our bungalow to "explain." They acknowledged having dropped in an extra marble, but on this wise—the automatic bell under their candidate's portrait was reported not to be working clearly, so, in order to test it, they got permission to drop in a marble! But, at the count up of the votes, this marble was discounted!! And, to the end of the chapter, the matter was never cleared up.

When Bill was put on the Education Committee he hoped to help improve the rather stagnant condition of the schools, but found it difficult to get anybody to get a move on. Then plague broke out, and practically everybody, rich and poor, moved out of the town and lived in impromptu huts of mud or iron sheets, erected on the open prairie. The schools of course were all closed and the teachers idle but drawing their full pay, and the children running wild. The missionary-sahib suggested that for a few hours each day the teachers hold open-air school beside the temporary habitations. Ridiculous! Preposterous! Such a thing had never been heard of in all the years since plague began its annual visitations. What other staggering proposal might not this foreigner make,

and perhaps carry out? The only safe way would be to get him off the committee!

Well, no Education Committee was called for over three months. Then we went out for a week's tour quite near Barispoor, and when we came back Bill accidentally heard that there was to be an Education Committee the next day. But no notice of it arrived. Thinking there had been a slip he wrote over a note to the chairman, and was informed that as he had been absent from the Education Committee meetings three times in succession without sending an excuse, he *ipso facto*, according to the rules of the Municipal Council, ceased to be a member!

Bill was astounded. What three meetings? Oh, three meetings that were held while he was out in camp! The rule was repeated, with great emphasis on the *ipso facto*. Now, the whole affair was so funny that Bill thought he would pursue it further. He hunted up the rules and discovered one that said a member must get twenty-four hours' notice before any committee meeting. He pointed this out to the chairman and assured him that if he had received a notice of any or all of those three committee meetings he could easily have come in for them, being only six miles out of Barispoor. The reply was that a notice *had* been sent by the official Municipal messenger. Bill now probed into this matter and discovered that it was perfectly true that the official messenger had

been sent to our bungalow, but . . . he had been instructed to find out from our people *how long the missionary-sahib was going to be out of town!*

So we had the laugh on our side after all, and when the chairman and his accomplices saw their little plot hadn't worked, they merely smiled without giving themselves away, and at the next general meeting of the Council, Bill was *ipso facto* reinstated.

In Barispor, as in most other Indian towns, the entire outcaste community was unrepresented on the Municipality, and had therefore no channels whereby to air their grievances or demand their rights. And they certainly did have grievances, quite apart from the centuries-old grievance of being the depressed classes and kept outside the town or village wall and entirely beyond the pale of everything. In Barispor, for instance, when a fine water supply was laid on, and the town, for the first time in its ancient history, had running water, a pipe carried the water to the exclusive club of the high-caste men about half a mile or more outside the town. This pipe actually passed the section where the outcastes lived, yet they were not allowed to tap it and have a faucet of their own. They had to go on carrying their water in large, heavy vessels from the well, as they had done from time immemorial. And not one of the caste men on the Council would lift his finger to help

them. But some years ago the Government, however, amended the Municipal Act and allowed the outcaste communities to submit a name for appointment on the Councils. The Barispoor depressed classes called a mass meeting, with the missionary-sahib as chairman, and sent a petition to the Collector to nominate their leader, Sakharam. We had known Sakharam for years and had no hesitation about giving him a boost, as he was comparatively well-educated and comparatively honourable.

When the caste members of the Council heard that Sakharam had actually been appointed, they were furious both with the outcastes and with Bill. The Brahmans resigned on the spot, and not one of the other caste members gave Sakharam the right hand of fellowship. He was absolutely "sent to Coventry"; so Bill took him under his wing, introduced him at his first Council meeting, and sat with him at the extreme end of the table in pointed isolation, chuckling inwardly at the humour of being one of the two undesirables!

Sakharam fortunately had grit enough to ignore every snub and slight, and by sheer force of character and imperturbability has kept his position and is now at least respected. The lot of the depressed classes has improved immensely, and they revel in the running water now supplied them by a municipal pipe run right into their section of the town! So, in spite of the slight impression we felt our-

selves making on the immemorial usages and customs of life in Barispoor, we at least helped the outcastes to help themselves.

On one of our district tours we visited a village which had been decimated by influenza. In one house a young man was lying desperately ill; and the tearful old father was wailing beside him. It transpired that the poor old man had lost his wife just four days previously, and felt sure he was going to lose his boy too. We sympathized suitably, we thought. Then, as Indian courtesy allows and welcomes, we enquired about the other members of the household, who were all sitting round listening.

“And who is this?” I asked, indicating a youngish woman crouching by the side of the sick-bed.

“She?” replied the old fellow casually. “Oh, she’s only my new wife.”

We had been asked to go to a village at “the back of beyond” and ten miles from our camp. We set off on our cycles but had not gone far before Bill’s tyre punctured. He mended it but it gave out twice again. By this time the day was far advanced and the tyre seemed perfectly hopeless; so I suggested that Bill go ahead on my cycle while I sat under a tree and waited for him. I had learned from long experience to carry a book along with me in case of unexpected delays or emergen-

cies. So Bill saw me comfortably settled under a big shady tree some distance from the nearest village; and as I saw his topi disappear through the trees and knew he could not possibly be back for three hours at least, I stretched out luxuriously and started to read.

An Indian man suddenly appeared from nowhere and stood directly in front of me. I salaamed, but he ignored my greeting and fired a volley of questions at me, spitting vociferously and emphatically between each one. "Who are you? . . . Where do you come from? . . . How old are you? . . . Why are you sitting here? . . . Got no husband? . . . You have? Then why has he gone off and left you? [this with decided suspicion]."

I answered his queries to the best of my ability, and he evidently found me an entirely new "type," for he put his hands to his mouth and let out an ear-piercing "halloo" to summon his friends. And they came—practically the whole village, big and little. He showed me off exactly as if I were the fat lady or the fasting man or the performing chicken in a side-show. And then the same questions were repeated, over and over again, and dozens more, as each fresh visitor appeared on the scene. They were specially curious about the husband and why he had deserted me. I pointed dramatically to the dilapidated cycle as proof positive that there was such a thing as a husband and that



THE GIRL TO THE LEFT AND HER BROTHER IN FRONT WERE BARELY SAVED FROM STARVATION. THEY ARE NOW STRAPPING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.

he would probably come back for me. But they shook their heads. *They* knew better. Who ever heard of a man dumping his wife down by the roadside unless he had got tired of her and gone off and left her?

I tried to entertain my uninvited guests by singing to them and telling them stories about our religion; but all my efforts fell flat. No white woman had ever been seen in that region before, and all they wanted was to gaze with impunity. And they did. For three solid hours I sat there surrounded by dozens and dozens of pairs of sparkling brown eyes, looking me through and through with unblinking insistence. Since then I have had the deepest sympathy with animals in the Zoo. I know just how they feel and how difficult it is to look outwardly polite and nonchalant when one is inwardly fuming with resentment at being regarded as a "specimen."

I would have walked off long before had I not been handicapped by the broken-down bicycle, but Bill had detached the front wheel and had gone off with the tool-bag, so I was helpless. But about four in the afternoon I decided to risk leaving the cycle in somebody's care, and got the least disagreeable man in the crowd to promise to keep it in his house till we sent for it the next day. I rose, salaamed to the still-open-mouthed crowd, and was just setting out when . . . I caught sight of a white thing bobbing up and down among the trees.

Bill's topi! Never did the sight of an ugly sun-helmet induce such a spasm of delight. For I was completely justified. Here was a live husband. He hadn't deserted me but had actually come back for me. My reputation was saved!

And the whole village escorted us for half a mile, and when I looked back at the first welcome bend of the road that was to take us out of sight, they were still gaping!

Supplies were scarce in camp, except rice, milk, eggs, and scraggy chickens; but, thanks to Bill's old rifle, we sometimes had venison. As the rifle was far from accurate, Bill did not always have good "luck" and could conveniently blame it all on the rifle. With his first box of cartridges his trophies amounted to one black buck and a man's toe! The last was no discredit to him, for the man had taken the loaded rifle (warned by Bill) and had absent-mindedly turned it upside down, steadied it on his little toe, and pulled the trigger. It was an expensive toe for us. We felt responsible for getting the man well, so had to send him away down to Barispoor to the best doctor available—or rather, the least unqualified one! The bill was unusually large—simply because a white man was going to pay it, and we supported the patient's enormous family during his absence. You can imagine how large that family is when I mention that the mother tells me she can never remember how

many children she has till they are all sleeping in a row on the floor at night.

But we had any amount of fun out of that ancient rifle. The first buck that fell to it was one of three handsome antelope that simply strolled across the field in front of our tents. But the second victim gave us a lot of trouble, both alive and dead. In cycling to a new camping-ground we missed our way and made a tiresome roundabout that landed us miles from camp. On gaining the top of a slight rise we almost ran into a large herd of hill antelope, but they scattered before Bill could untie his gun. I fear I taunted him with his unreadiness, for he made up his mind he would get one of those deer *anyway*, and just show me! He made off over the rising ground and disappeared. Then I spied a fine black buck double back on his tracks, so Fuzzle and I decided to round him up for the sahib's gun. We were both exhausted, but we circled that buck and dodged that buck, and circled and dodged him again . . . and lost him. But just then we heard a shot, and a minute later the conquering hero appeared over the hillock dragging his prize—a four-year-old buck weighing probably a hundred pounds.

The question now was, how to get him to our distant camp, but fortunately we were not far from a village where the weekly bazaar was being held that day, and we were thankful to see a string of bullock-carts and pedestrians coming along the

road. We hailed the first driver and asked him to take the buck in his empty cart. He didn't even answer! He just looked through us and drove steadily past. The same with the second and the third. Then of course it dawned on us. These were caste men who could not pollute themselves or their precious cart with a dead thing! We tried some men, afoot, but they were just as particular.

There was nothing for it but to negotiate it for ourselves. Bill fastened the buck on to his handlebars by means of Fuzzle's chain, and wobbled unsteadily along. Then poor old Fuzzle gave out, so Bill lifted him up and carried him under one arm while with the other he guided the over-weighted bike. I was riding ahead but jumped off when I heard an ominous scramble, and looked back in time to see a sight for the gods—a white man and a dead buck and a live puppy all sprawling on the ground and mixed up with a prostrate bicycle!

On reaching the village we had the luck to run across an outcaste Christian who was delighted to carry the buck to camp, six miles off; and as I automatically pedalled on and on and on and on, the one thing that bore me up and made me almost forget my fatigue, was the thought that we would soon catch sight of a cheery camp with our faithful Krishna moving round, and an appetizing aroma of dinner to welcome us. But, alas, the camp was black. There was neither the glow of a fire nor of a lamp, and Krishna was stretched out prostrate

with a kind of spasm. It was just the last straw to an overpowering day; but there was nothing for it but to get busy and cook dinner. Our Christians carried off the buck and skinned it and cut it up, and we let them have it all except what little we needed, and a savoury liver was soon sizzling on the frying-pan.

But we had not yet done with our buck. High-caste men seldom eat meat; so we were amazed to hear, on the quiet, that a wealthy Maratha of the village was highly offended with us for not presenting him with some venison. Bill went at once to his house and explained that we had thought it impossible that he, a caste man, would eat meat at all, and especially a deer shot by a sahib, carried by an outcaste Christian, and cut up in the outcaste quarter of his own village. If any meat could ever be called ceremonially unclean, surely that could. But our friend merely smiled in non-committal fashion and let the matter drop. Later on in the day, we heard that he was disappointed at not *yet* having received any venison, so we hastened to send him surreptitiously the shoulder we had kept for ourselves, and we received his surreptitious thanks! It was amusing to see that caste, which would refuse to take a carcass into an empty cart, could yield to friendship. Or was it the savoury smell of the pottage?

VI

THE PEOPLE AMONG WHOM WE DWELT

SUPPOSE that in democratic little old America one-fifth of the population were compelled to live outside the bounds of their town or village and were only allowed to step inside at certain hours of the day and with certain restrictions, being forbidden to cross anybody's threshold or draw water from anybody's faucet? Can you imagine what kind of social order would result? Could you expect much in the way of brotherhood? . . . of liberty, equality and fraternity?

Yet that is exactly what we have in India—sixty millions of human beings living beyond the pale of ordinary society. The strong village walls which, in the days of lawlessness, were necessary safeguards against raiders but which now, under the just and mild rule of a foreign Government, are often crumbling and unrepaired, are still effective barriers between caste and outcaste. On the outside of the walls, and often some distance from them, cluster groups of huts—the homes of the depressed classes where they live and move and have their being and multiply prodigiously. On no account must they mix with their betters inside

the walls. They have their own outcaste wells, and if these dry up in the hot weather they may not touch the caste wells, however plentiful the supply may be. They must either hire a caste man to bring them water from his well, or then they must walk till they find it. In the famine of 1918 we knew outcastes who walked three miles to a muddy pool to fetch a little water for their thirst-ridden families!

Caste, then, is a cruel encroachment on personal liberty. In fact, orthodox Indian society is divided and subdivided into numerous castes and sub-castes which are like water-compartments. The compartment into which a man is born is his fate . . . his *nasheeb*, depending partly on his behaviour in a former existence, and partly on the whim of the gods; and in this god-given compartment he must live and marry and die. The goldsmith's son, for instance, must marry a goldsmith's daughter and bring up a family of boys who will be goldsmiths and of girls who will marry goldsmiths; and when he dies his funeral will be conducted and his soul will be cared for with all the ceremonies sanctioned by immemorial usage in the goldsmiths' caste. No wealth or effort on his part, no turn of fortune's wheel, could ever lift him out of his caste and deposit him in any other. The inevitable result of such a system is, of course, the opposite of brotherhood, except within the limits of one's own particular sub-caste. Caste, there-

fore, is the greatest barrier to a religion which emphasizes the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

Yet it is marvellous to see how caste is showing signs of loosening up—especially in the cities. Men of all castes are glad of the trolley-car and have to sit in it side-by-side with those whose very shadow ought to spell ceremonial pollution but who, having paid the same fare, are entitled to the same privileges. The same holds good for railway trains and steamboats and other means of conveyance, for the Indian is fond of travel, and even poor Indians who do not get enough to eat, can always scrape up a railway fare to go on a jaunt. Education, of course, is a potent factor. The sons of goldsmiths do not, now, invariably follow their traditional profession. Those of them who get a good high school or college education may go into Government offices or even into business. Increasing numbers are seeking education and culture abroad, and they simply must sacrifice caste restrictions in order to visit Europe or America. An expensive purification ceremony on their return is supposed to wash away the pollution thus acquired, but the point is that they are finding new interests in life for which they are willing to let down the old strict prohibitions of caste rules.

In Barispoor we were happy to number our friends in both high caste and low caste circles and among those of no caste whatever—the outcastes.

Out of all the grades and sub-grades of Indian society with which we came in contact I shall choose just three examples—high, medium, and low.

At the very top of the social scale stands the Brahman—intellectual, cultured, exclusive, conscious of his superiority both as a twice-born individual and as belonging to the priestly caste, the acknowledged leaders of the people. In the old days the Brahmans were primarily the spiritual leaders, officiating as priests at the numerous religious ceremonies, advisers to the king and court, and in possession of all the chief political offices. But now in these prosaic modern days their superior intellect and education put them into many important and responsible posts, as collectors, judges, magistrates; while great numbers are clerks in Government offices and in the railway and other public bodies.

In Barispoor we had many Brahman friends. One of them was a successful lawyer, and such a progressive thinker that he allowed his daughter to reach the great age of sixteen before having her married! Shortly afterwards she died of consumption, and his orthodox friends pointed out that this was an inevitable result of the folly of educating a woman and not marrying her off when she was young!

This Brahman lawyer was very friendly with us but had no use for Christianity for himself

though he was glad, he said, that we came and helped the despicable outcastes with whom the Brahmans could not and would not concern themselves. He had a tremendous admiration for the American Republic as the ideal form of government. In fact, everything American was good and everything British was bad, for our friend had an idea that America, being the land of the free, was a place where people could do as they liked and get what they wanted. Now Bill, though a good, sound American, found himself increasingly appreciative of Britain as he saw for himself her handling of difficult and delicate situations. And so there would follow some earnest but, to me, highly amusing discussions in which the American was emphatically pro-British and the Indian violently pro-American.

One day the Brahman came to the bungalow in great haste and excitement and asked for the sahib. Bill was away at a village, so my visitor told me they wanted him to be chairman at a public meeting in the evening. I tried to find out what sort of meeting it was but he, probably having a contempt for the female intelligence, refused to divulge the nature of it. He tried to get me to promise definitely that Bill would preside, as they wanted to announce it immediately. I knew enough of Indian ways to refuse to entangle Bill with any such promise, so invited our friend to call again in the late afternoon, when the sahib

would be sure to be home. He did so, and of course had to explain to Bill what the meeting was about. It was to be a public protest against the Government's "high-handed action" in interning Mrs. Besant. (Mrs. Besant, at this time, had been engaged in violent agitation, and after being very patient and lenient with her the Government had at last imposed a very mild form of internment—confining her within the Madras Presidency.) "And you, Mr. Wilberforce," added the Brahman, "being an American, must feel just as indignant over this injustice as we do. In your free land, where every one has a right to air his opinions, a thing like this could never happen. Therefore, I know that you will be a sympathetic chairman."

Bill lay back in his chair and laughed. "In my free land," he said, "we certainly allow freedom of speech—but within limits. I'm amazed at the forbearance of the British Government. I think Mrs. Besant should have been interned long before now, and I'm perfectly sure that had the American Government been in charge here, it would have put the kibosh on her months ago!" Our friend went away quite puzzled and a little hurt. The protest meeting took place, but the only American in the town was *not* the chairman!

Another Brahman friend of ours was a rich banker, well-educated, imposing, and sophisticated. I used to visit his two wives (who called each other "Sister" and by doing so puzzled me not a

little, at first, as to their relationship) and the other women in his gaudy home, and I always smiled inwardly at the strange admixture of East and West. This man had a liking for the things he saw in a white man's home, and he had bought and placed in his public room all sorts of furniture which rightly belong to other rooms in a house. I don't think it was used by the women at all, for they would push the gaily-upholstered chairs aside (all but one reserved for me) and squat on the beautifully-tiled floor, with their backs propped against the marble-topped wash-stand which stood in the middle of the drawing-room, just exactly as they had been accustomed to squat on their ordinary mud floors. If the master of the house happened to come in, they would all scurry out of sight like frightened rabbits, as became well-brought-up Brahman women, and would watch furtively from behind pillars and through half-open doors, while the brazen white woman actually *sat* in the presence of their lord and master, and talked with him about the political situation, the Barispor elections, and other unfeminine topics.

But our most familiar friend among the Brahmans was a man of immense dignity and reserve, and a deep and eager thinker. He was a teacher in the local English school, and he tutored us in Marathi; but many a time we would forget the immediate task in hand and get involved in some long philosophical discussion which would run half

an hour or even an hour over the usual lesson time. Like the lawyer, this man was fond of us personally and he positively loved us when we showed appreciation of his favourite classics. He also, like our lawyer friend, admired our self-sacrifice in working among the untouchables, but he said frankly that it was a vain hope that *educated* India would ever become Christian even, in so much, as the *nominal* sense of the word.

The religion of these men is hard to define. They were too well educated to believe implicitly in the potency of material idols or in the weird cosmogony of Hinduism, but they were intensely orthodox in outward observances of rites and ceremonies.

Brahman converts are few, for they are a proud and stiff-necked people, perfectly satisfied with their exclusive position and sublimely unconscious of any need for anything better. We admire their intellect and culture, and while it is hard to forget their treatment of the depressed classes, we try to remember that their attitude is a heritage which has come down through the ages from the days when the battle was to the strong, no matter whether physical, mental, or spiritual strength was involved.

It is often said that the backbone of Western India is the Maratha. Most Marathas are farmers, hard-working, stolid and conservative in their work and ways, backward in education, slow to

respond to any political impetus, but an immense reservoir of latent strength. They do not live in the midst of their land, but for the sake of protection stay in the nearest village and go out to their field-work every morning.

In some districts modern methods are in use, and you can see iron ploughs drawn by a quaint team of bullocks with perhaps a buffalo or two to round out the requisite number. But, for the most part, the Maratha uses an old-fashioned plough, a wooden concoction made by the village carpenter which merely tickles the surface of the ground. It is hard to convince him that a new-fangled invention would ensure better crops and that it actually has done so in such and such a place. He will shake his red-turbaned head, spit out the scarlet juice of the betel-nut he has been chewing while he listened to you, and remark in a tone of fatality and finality, "What was good enough for my father and my grandfather and my great-grandfather and all my fathers away back to the time of the gods and the giants . . . well, that's good enough for me." Ay, it's a hard life, a farmer's . . . toil, toil, toil from morning till night, year in and year out. And now and again will come a famine year when there isn't an ear of corn to be seen. And if it be near the time for the breaking of the rains he will lift his heavy head and scan the brassy, cloudless sky with anxious eyes. "It's our fate—our *nasheeb*. What can one do?" he

will say as he sighs. And yet, you know, you have just been telling him what he *might* do!

This fatal fatalism of the Marathas was very noticeable in the famine of 1918, when practically there were no crops in this part of India and therefore no fodder. It began to cost more to feed a bullock than a human being. The Marathas sold their cattle for half-price, then for quarter-price, then for a few rupees, and finally gave them away for nothing. But nobody would take them, for nobody could afford to feed them. And by and by, in the fields and by the roadside we would see the whitening skeletons of bullocks and buffaloes, goats and horses, chewed clean by the jackals and the pariah dogs after starving human beings had clawed off every eatable scrap. But there is one plant which grows to profusion in India and is considered a vicious pest—the prickly pear. The Government experimented to ascertain whether this plant could not possibly be made useful. They burned off the thorns, chopped the leaves fine, and mixed them with a little meal or chopped grain-stalks. They found this an excellent fodder. Demonstration stations were opened in numerous centres, and the farmers were shown healthy cattle fed, day by day, on nothing but this prepared prickly pear. They were urged to follow suit and thus tide over the time till the next crop. A few were persuaded, but the great majority shook their heads and declared that the thing could not be

done. Why? Their one irrefutable argument was, that if God had meant the prickly pear to be used for fodder then He would have made it without thorns! And so thousands of valuable cattle died of preventable starvation, and when the next rains did break, there were not enough draught bullocks to do the ploughing; and some good ground actually lay unsown because the owners had not the money either to buy or to hire bullocks to prepare it.

I love to watch the Marathas ploughing with a team of ten or twelve. There are usually two men, one to walk alongside shouting and flourishing his whip and twisting the tail of any obstreperous bullock, and the other in the rear to guide the plough. On one of our camping tours we pitched our tents near a field which the Marathas were ploughing. They used eleven bullocks and one lone buffalo. Fuzzle strolled across to see what all the noise was about and to bark his disapproval. Then he spied a rope dangling from the shoulder of the rear Maratha, so ran up and seized it with his teeth, and pulled and pulled, trying to keep the whole cavalcade back. You could not believe how droll it looked—the tiny puppy pitting his puny powers against a dozen draught animals and, to his intense indignation, being dragged ignominiously along in the furrow, his four feet sliding helplessly through the soft earth. Even the usually imperturbable Maratha saw the humour of it

and shouted to his friend to look; and we could hear their bass guffaws right across the field.

The Maratha, being a practical man who earns his daily bread with the sweat of his brow, does not concern himself much with religion or philosophy. He leaves all that to the learned Brahman priests whom he will call in on important family occasions—births, betrothals, coming-of-age ceremonies, marriages, deaths, post-death anniversaries. But every morning when he gets up he will bathe and worship the little brass gods and goddesses that stand in a niche in his wall; and as he goes out to his fields he will make an obeisance to Maruti, the monkey-god, whose shrine is usually diplomatically placed right beside the chief gate. In his fields he will also have a little shrine to Khandoba, the god of the shepherds, and potent to bless or curse the flocks. And near harvest-time he will give a coat of whitewash to the “auspicious” stones set up in his fields.

One of our Maratha acquaintances came to us in tears, during the influenza epidemic, and asked for medicine for his sick boy.

“Have you brought a bottle?” I asked. He held one up.

“But what is that in it?” I continued. “Isn’t it medicine?”

“Oh, yes,” he said, “but it’s only the dispensary medicine. They say your ‘influenza medicine-water’ has cured a lot of people. I’d rather have

it," and he was about to uncork and empty his bottle. I stopped him in time, as I didn't want the reputation of encouraging my patients to throw away the dispensary medicine. I suggested that he might use *both*. We gave him a bottle of our mixture, and Bill, at this Hindu farmer's request, prayed to the Christian's God to have mercy. The child's life was spared—whether because of our medicine or the municipal dispensary medicine or Bill's prayer, who can tell? But since then the grateful father has been most friendly towards us, and very good to the Christian people in his village.

The Marathas are beginning to wake up from their torpor. They are sending more of their boys and some of their girls to school. In some places they are beginning to resent the dominance of the Brahmans and to fight for political rights. In one Native State the Maratha ruler has displaced Brahman employees with non-Brahman men just as soon as he could get enough of them sufficiently educated and trained for the respective Government posts. Many Marathas, too, have joined the *Satya-shodaks*—a comparatively new religious movement the name of which means "Truth-seekers" and one of whose principal tenets is the equality of men. There is a great future for the Marathas when they come into their own, and the future of Western India will depend very largely on how they use their power.

The outcastes, like their superiors, are subdivided into numerous sections with hard and fast lines of distinction; and feeling often runs as high and bitter between them as between caste and outcaste. But there are two main groups in Western India.

The Mahars, who consider themselves much superior to the others, are the official messengers, sent here and there at the beck and call of the village headman. They also have a right to every animal that dies a natural death. When a farmer loses a bullock or buffalo or goat from any ailment whatsoever, he must not console himself by making what he can out of the hide and hoofs. He must simply leave the animal lying where it fell, and send word to the Mahars. He seldom needs to do so, however, for, like vultures, the Mahars scent out their prospective prey and are on the *qui vive* for the actual death. Then they pounce on the carcass, take it to their quarter holus-bolus, and eat it raw. No more revolting sight can meet even sophisticated eyes than a crowd of excited Mahars swarming round the loot and clamouring for their pound of flesh—diseased flesh—as one of their leaders cuts it up and distributes it according to each family's hereditary share. In return for these public services the Mahars own a piece of community land in whose yield they share. They also do field labour for the Marathas and get paid in kind.

The great majority of the Christians of Western India come from the Mahars, but in our particular parish more than nine-tenths of our people are from the still lower group, the Mangs. The Mangs are by profession rope-makers and broom-makers, and unprofessionally they are first-class thieves and liars. Probably because it takes a thief to catch a thief they are also the village watchmen, and in return for this job they receive offerings in kind—a handful of grain from each householder. Most Mangs are dirty in their persons and habits and homes—dirtier than the Mahars, which is saying a good deal. But they are warm-hearted, generous impulsive and hot-tempered. They are riddled with family feuds that last from generation to generation; and a Mang quarrel is the last thing in expressiveness!

It was a puzzle to us to know how to accept Mang hospitality without squirming, but we felt it was not the slightest use to try and be district missionaries unless we could visit filthy houses with equanimity and, what was more, eat food prepared in them! Permanganate of potash was the solution. We always carry a small vial of permanganate with us and before attacking a doubtful meal in a doubtful house, disinfect our interiors by swilling down a big draught of well-permanganated water; and though it by no means eliminates the dirt, it probably saves us from most of the germs. Our hosts ask us why we put these funny things

in the water, and we say "doctor's orders," which is absolutely true, for we had a missionary doctor-friend to "prescribe" this medicine for us!

Both Mahars and Mangs, like other poor Indians, are apt to be in the grip of the money-lender. In hard times, with nothing at all laid by for a rainy day (though in India the hard times come with the *non-rainy* days!) they have no recourse but to borrow. When a family wedding comes along they must make as brave a show as such-and-such a family did. So they plunge wildly, magnificently, into debt which they know they can never repay—a debt which will hang like a mill-stone round their own necks and their children's necks and the necks of their children's children. Many a man at this very day is paying interest on a debt contracted fifty years ago at his own grandfather's wedding. And interest at six per cent. *per month* is no light consideration. It only takes sixteen months to pay as interest a sum equal to the original amount borrowed, so that in fifty years a family will have paid a creditor forty times the capital. And in numerous cases the rate of interest is double this—actually two annas in the rupee per month—one-eighth of the capital sum—twelve and a half per cent. per month! On pay-day at the mill in Barispoor we would see whole rows of rascally money-lenders squatting at the mill-gate, ready to waylay their victims and bleed them of their whole pay before they could get it, either

home or to the drink-shop. And what can the poor wretches do but incur fresh debts?

It is often asked why the majority of our native Christians are from the depressed classes and why we do not make more efforts among the better classes? There are two main reasons. In the first place, most missions definitely work for the outcastes because they feel that they need us most and that, like Christ, we should begin with the poor and lowly. The other reason is that, given an equal appeal to a caste man and an outcaste, it is infinitely easier for the latter to respond; for, whereas the caste man in becoming a Christian will probably lose family and earthly possessions and everything he has so far counted precious, the outcaste has practically nothing to lose but everything to gain. It is a cure for depression to look at some of our Christians of outcaste origin—now useful and respectable and self-respecting citizens, and holding posts of responsibility and honour, such as pastors, teachers, carpentry masters, clerks, contractors. Many of them bring with them faults and failings that distract the missionary and make him sometimes wonder whether it is at all worth while? But lying, deceit, dishonesty, intrigue, improvidence—these are all largely the heritage of environment; and improved economical and social conditions are slowly but surely bearing fruit.

There is no doubt that the status enjoyed by

Christians is an attraction to outcastes conscious of their disabilities, and one cannot wonder that many converts have mixed motives. Recently there was a mass meeting of outcastes down in South India, who had come to the place where they could no longer tolerate their treatment—especially the fact that they must not go within a certain number of yards of any Brahman. They decided that the only way out of their difficulties was to change their religion, but the question was whether they should become Mohammedans or Christians! A select committee was appointed to weigh the arguments of a Christian pastor and a Mohammedan *moulvie* respectively, prepare a memorandum on the subject, and submit it at the next mass meeting!

VII

A PILGRIMAGE TO PANDHARPUR

A LONG the dusty Indian highway trails a sorry little group—several grown-ups, half a dozen children, and a couple of babies. One baby rides on its father's head and the other on its mother's hip. Two of the party carry long sticks with saffron-coloured flags on the end, and most of them have bundles on their heads. They all look tired and travel-stained. Their clothes and their bare feet are powdered with dust. We stop and ask them where they are going?

“To Pandhari, of course,” they reply, and their weary faces light up. They have been on the road for a fortnight, covering something like fifteen miles a day, and they have still a hundred miles to go.

A little farther on we see a strange figure making unaccountable contortions and flapping up and down. Coming nearer, we discover a man lying full length on the road. His outstretched hands carry a small stick with which he makes a mark in the dust. Then he rises, puts his toes to this mark, and once more flings himself down to measure his length and thus fulfill his vow. As he rises we note the perspiration making runnels down his

dust-covered face. He glances at us for a moment with strained eyes, and we ask him where he is going?

“To Pandhari, of course,” he replies, and his grimy face beams with inner joy. For will he not see the great Vithoba? Will he not stand for a moment before his blessed image, place a garland of flowers on it, and come away refreshed and inspired? Will not Vithoba be gracious to this worshipper of his who has laboriously measured his length for a specified distance to do him honour? Ah, this is a small thing to do for love of the great Vithoba! And the lonely wayfarer prostrates himself with renewed abandon.

We feel that we too must go to Pandhari where the mighty and love-inspiring Vithoba reigns, and if we, being aliens, cannot pay him a personal visit, we can at least see the crowds of pilgrims.

Pandharpur, familiarly and affectionately known as “Pandhari,” is a town in Western India about two hundred miles southeast of Bombay. In a great temple near the banks of the river Bhima, a tributary of the sacred Krishna, there is a famous image of the god Vithoba. It is of great age but unknown origin, and is believed to have been a plebeian local deity so popular and powerful that he was adroitly admitted into the aristocracy of the Hindu pantheon as an incarnation of Vishnu.

Every day and all day the cult of this image is carried on by an army of priests and other at-

tendants attached to the temple. He is awakened each morning and washed and dressed and fed, and he possesses a magnificent wardrobe of silk garments and a whole treasury of priceless jewels with which he is decked out on special occasions. Hindus make pilgrimages from all parts of India, especially on the big festival days in July and November, and we had the privilege of paying a long-planned visit last July.

We approached Pandharpur from beyond the river, and a sudden bend in the road revealed the broad and shallow Bhima, with the town perched on its opposite bank. Long before reaching the river we could hear the shouts and singing of the bathers who literally swarmed in the water.

Some men are prancing up and down and swimming about like anybody else enjoying a good plunge. Their wet brown skins scintillate in the sun, and the water they throw up in their glee falls back again like a spray of flashing diamonds.

Others are standing waist-deep and telling their beads with rapt expressions.

Others lap up the holy water and gulp it down ecstatically.

Others are washing their hair or their clothes.

On the sandbanks sit siren-like figures—Hindu women with their black locks streaming in the wind and their brightly-coloured *saris* spread out in long rows to dry.

And there in the middle of the stream stands a

man with a cloth package in his hand. He flings it in. The cloth opens out, and the ashes of his revered father are scattered on the water. The man devoutly prays that the Bhima may bear the precious remains safely to its junction with the sacred Krishna, and that thereby all may go well with his father in the life beyond and that he himself may obtain merit with the gods because of this act of filial piety.

As we gaze at all these strange sights and realize how little we really understand of the background of India, several boats pull forward to the bank and jostle and jam each other as the rival boatmen make a bid for our patronage. We choose a boat with a yellow wooden horse adorning the prow, and guided by this gaudy steed we safely negotiate the sacred waters and land on the opposite bank, where we find a bewildering show.

Here are primitive versions of the Ferris wheel—four crude wooden cages propelled round and round by a hand-worked lever. The occupants sit cross-legged, hanging on for dear life and yelling with mingled fear and delight as they wobble erratically from side to side and up and down.

Here stands a fat, complacent, well-dressed man, looking with stolid indifference above the heads of some women who, in turn, are passionately kissing his bare feet. He must be a religious *guru* (teacher), but to unbiased observers he looks uncommonly worldly and well-fed. With a gesture

of impatience he finally shakes himself free from his devotees, struts off like a prideful peacock, and is soon lost in the crowd.

Here is a wild-eyed "holy" man with unkempt locks and a loose saffron robe. He carries a saffron flag, a brass begging bowl and a string of elaborately carved beads—his rosary. Under his arm is a one-stringed harp made out of a big fruit like a pumpkin.

Here is a group of three "holy" men of a different species. They are dressed in women's clothes and wear high, sugar-loaf hats made of peacock feathers. They are beating their kettle-drums and raking in the coins of the credulous.

Farther on we catch sight of still another kind of "saint" standing on one leg. An admiring bystander eagerly informs us that he has been in this position for three hours and has nine hours more to go to fulfill his vow. His bare right foot rests against his rigid left knee; his right arm is pressed close to his side with his rosary in his right hand; while his left arm, bent at the elbow, holds a brass bowl slightly in front of his body. His eyes are fixed on the ground with a vacant expression like that of a person in a trance, and no movement or sound in the seething crowd causes him so much as to move an eyelid. On a little mat in front of him are scattered many coins which he will no doubt condescend to appropriate when he finishes his amazing balancing stunt.



WITH A LITTLE STICK IN HER HAND SHE MAKES A MARK IN THE SAND, THEN GETS UP AND PROSTRATES
HERSELF AGAIN WITH HER TOES AT THIS MARK—AND SO ON AND ON.

The flights of stone steps leading from the river bank to the higher level of the town itself are thronged with men and women and children, and at the edge sit several repulsive "holy" beggars with their bare bodies and their faces smeared with white ash, through which their eyes leer horribly. We elbow our way through the good-natured and friendly crowd and reach a street likewise packed with moving humanity. People are coming and going each way and keep to no rule of the road, so one must be quick-witted enough to dart here and there as opportunity offers.

The little open shops and booths are doing a roaring trade, and lakhs and lakhs of rupees change hands. The sweetmeat shops show stacks of sticky, fly-beset goodies; the bookshops their gaudy pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses; and the cloth shops their piles of brightly coloured wares, while from every possible and impossible point of vantage hang the most startling little frocks and bonnets for babies. The frocks that are supposed to be in "Europe" style are nerve-racking creations of crude green or red or yellow or purple silk trimmed with tawdry tinsel and quantities of cheap cotton lace that would give any white baby convulsions, but Indian mothers love to dress up their little brownies in them, and fondly suppose them to be the last word in "Europe" elegance. There is also a brisk business in rosaries of tulsi wood—tulsi being the sweet balsam, sacred in India, of

which a plant often grows at the door of orthodox Hindu houses.

The strolling pedestrians suddenly subside into the smallest possible space by the side of the road, as a frenzied khaki-clad policeman appears on the scene, brandishing his baton and trying to make room for a noisy procession approaching down the narrow street. It consists of a fife-and-drum band and a number of banners of purple silk bearing the form of the monkey god embroidered in gold thread. For, although Vithoba is the goal of every pilgrim, folks are still catholic or, perhaps, prudent enough to let their surplus devotion include lesser lights; so at Vithoba's great festivals many subsidiary gods and goddesses come in for a share of attention, both material and spiritual. As we pass a small shrine by the roadside we see a man at the entrance make a profound obeisance to the figure of Ganpati, the jolly, elephant-headed god. Here again, at a street corner, stand a number of sacred cows. An old woman comes up, gives the attendant a *pice* (half a cent), and is allowed to perform an act of worship by touching first a cow and then her own breast.

It is slow work to make any headway through the seething masses, but finally we reach the immense temple which houses that simple figure, three feet nine inches high, carved out of the trap rock, which draws unto itself the ardent devotion of millions of Hindus. By the temple gate large bam-

boo enclosures have been erected, and in these we see women herded together just like cattle in a pen but with far less room. Yet they all seem satisfied with life as they squat in tightly packed rows on the ground, gossiping or dozing or watching for the signal that it is now their turn to be admitted.

A courteous police-officer, himself a Hindu, takes us by a private staircase to the roof of the temple. From here we can see down into a spacious courtyard where five hundred men are waiting to visit Vithoba. The officer explains that the pilgrims are admitted in batches of five hundred—men and women alternately. Each such group is allowed just half an hour, so that during the twenty-four hours of the auspicious day only about 20,000 out of the 300,000 pilgrims attain their heart's desire; and each of these lucky ones gets only five seconds actually at the shrine.

No untouchables are allowed into the temple, so we know that these five hundred men beneath us are all of good caste. There are many Brahmans, but the great majority are Marathas, the sturdy but backward farmer class of Western India. They are mostly dressed in white, and their red turbans make vivid splashes, with here a lilac spot and there a brilliant yellow one. It would be difficult to picture five hundred able-bodied white men content to squat on a stone floor, with no room to move round and with nothing to do, for hours at a time. But these are Easterners, proficient in the

gentle art of killing time, and they look patient and happy, with an air of subdued expectancy. Each one carries a string of fresh flowers to throw to Vithoba, and flower-sellers walk up and down trying to tempt them to buy bigger and more expensive garlands of roses and jasmine. The heavy fragrance floats up to us on the balcony.

Some of the men doze as they sit huddled up with their arms round their knees. A number of young boys lie full-length and sound asleep between the rows of sitters.

But now comes the signal for this particular batch to be admitted. They rise and stretch themselves with an air of relief, hold their pathetic little offerings of flowers in readiness, and follow each other in single file and in perfect order out of sight. The officer takes us to another part of the temple roof which is pierced by giant air-shafts. One of these leads down to the spot immediately in front of Vithoba's image. The shrine itself was, of course, out of the range of our vision, but we could see the line of pilgrims moving towards it and then away from it. The worshippers naturally want to linger in front of their god and take more than the allotted five seconds, so two attendants are on duty to prevent any one from poaching on the next person's privileges. One attendant pushes each devotee forward into the shrine and the other pulls him out.

Imagine just one—two—three—four—five sec-

onds in which to fulfill the ambition of a lifetime, to say your prayers and make your vows in presence of your deity before being forcibly hauled away from him!

But a five seconds' visit with his god by no means satisfies the craving for *bhakti*, so the devout pilgrim proceeds to a court not far from the shrine where there is more room. We looked down another shaft and what did we see? A dignified Brahman bows gravely towards the shrine, then crosses his arms, seizes the lobes of his ears with the opposite hands, and skips up and down and spins round and round until he staggers with religious ecstasy. Then he prostrates himself on the stone floor and rolls over and over to one side and then back again. But even here there is neither time nor permission to loiter, so an attendant furnished with a lusty cloth whip thrashes the writhing bodies of the over-zealous until they get up and make room for others.

To an outsider it seems at first like ludicrous child's play, but the tragedy of it rushes over one and chokes back any momentary inclination to be amused. All that wealth of devotion lavished on a piece of stone graven by human hands! Thoughtful worshippers may be conscious of a god or a spirit back of the image, but the great, illiterate, credulous masses of India think in terms of the tangible object itself.

And after the pilgrimage to their Mecca, what

then? Well, the pilgrims invariably go back home tired out and penniless but usually happy and inspired and determined to repeat the experience, if possible.

One day when we were camping in a Travellers' Bungalow many miles from Pandharpur, a Maratha man hobbled on to the verandah to take shelter from a passing shower. He was clad in scanty and filthy rags and his feet were swollen and blistered. He told us he had started out with ample money for his railway fare to and from Pandhari, but, somehow or other, what with the various pilgrim taxes and the attractions of the shops and the wiles of the "confidence" men, and most of all the exorbitant demands of the pious priests, he had been left without a cent. In fact, the only thing he had brought back with him, the only thing he had got for nothing was this . . . and he fumbled clumsily to locate his ragged pocket and at last produced . . . a Christian tract! A white lady had given it to him one day in the streets of Pandharpur. He couldn't read it, of course. Oh, no, he was just a poor ignorant man, but away off in his village, the young son of the headman had been to school and could read and write, and some night he would ask him to read this story to him, and then he would know all about it.

To witness a crowd of devotees on a festival day is to become acutely aware of great spiritual and

emotional forces both individual and national which, so far, have hardly felt the impact of so-called Western civilization or culture. To direct these forces into healthy and useful channels, to keep them untarnished by materialistic influences, and to give the great, hungry heart of India an adequate and a noble outlet for her overflowing instincts for devotion—these are some of the vital problems that lie before her statesmen, her patriots and her reformers.

VIII

THROUGH THE DEEP WATERS

EXCITEMENT? Lots of it. Thrills? Heaps of them. Our biggest thriller? The rich man going through the deep waters.

Night after night, in a secluded spot in our secluded garden, you could have seen a quaint trio sitting round a table with a couple of books and a lamp. A middle-aged man, stolid and seemingly imperturbable, squats on a chair with his legs drawn up under him. His bright pink turban is laid on the ground beside him, and his one lock of hair, pendent from the very centre of his head, streams in each occasional breath of wind. A little silver box at his waist, hung on a silver chain which passes over his right shoulder and under his left arm, scintillates as it comes within the tiny circle of light.

Opposite him sits a bright-faced youth, his very black skin contrasting with his sparkling white teeth and spotless white turban as he smiles and nods in acquiescence to what he hears.

The third member of the group is a white woman trying to give some glimmerings of a religion of freedom and brotherhood to these two enquirers who, like Nicodemus of old, prefer the privacy of the kindly night.

Bapurao (Bah-poo-row, equivalent to Mr. Bapu) was a well-to-do merchant in Barispor, by birth a Wani—of a large and influential trading community, and by religion a Lingayet. The little silver box which we noticed contains his god—a pear-shaped piece of stone. This was given to him at the initiation ceremony when he passed from childhood to manhood. He wears it day and night, and every morning he takes it out, bathes and worships it, and puts it back again.

Bapurao had property in Barispor and a grain-shop. Two of his customers aroused his curiosity—modest and well-mannered women who always paid for their grain instead of running up an account as most other folks did. He found that they were the mother and the wife of the Christian pastor, a particularly fine man of outcaste origin but well-educated and cultured and the friend and confidante of both caste and outcaste. Bapurao knew nothing whatever about this new-fangled religion called Christianity, except that white strangers brought it from overseas and taught it to the lowly and unspeakable outcastes. It could, of course, have no meaning for him—a rich tradesman and a Lingayet; but he became very fond of the pastor and had long talks with him, and strange thoughts would flit through his mind as he listened to revolutionary ideas of a God who was not to be feared but loved; who considered all men his children, thus making them brothers of one

family; and who needed neither tangible image in the temple nor red-painted stone by the wayside nor pear-shaped stone in its silver box to visualize him to his worshippers.

When Bapurao's wife died, he was seized by a sudden impulse to join the ranks of the Christians. So he asked to be received and to be given a Christian wife. But he stipulated that the wife must be of Wani origin. Now, Wani converts are almost *nil*, so we wrote round in frantic haste to numerous mission stations. After about three months we heard of a suitable girl, so sent for Bapurao and told him the good news. He received it without enthusiasm and with evident embarrassment. Presently we elicited the astounding fact that he had yielded to family pressure and had already been married for two months to a woman of his own caste. And he had been afraid to tell us in case we would be angry!

You can imagine our consternation and disappointment. It seemed dreadful to lose this good man just because of unavoidable delay in finding a suitable bride. To our limited vision all hope seemed gone. Bapurao remained friendly but avoided all mention of religion and seemed to have settled down resignedly in the old ways.

But the good Lord can bring things to pass in His own wise way and remove obstacles in His own good time! Within a year Bapurao's second wife died! He soon appeared at the bungalow

and asked to be received into Christian fellowship. We were convinced of his sincerity and agreed to have the ceremony in secret because he anticipated trouble from his caste.

We experienced that night one of the thrills that all too seldom fall to a missionary's lot—the admission of a rich, high-caste man into the ranks of the despised Christians. Never had the tremendous character of the step struck me so forcibly as when this middle-aged idol-worshipper stood up and confessed Christ, and then, removing his coat and shirt, took from the chain at his waist the silver box containing the god he had worshipped for thirty years and which he had always considered his most precious possession. He handed it to the white sahib and then was baptised. A few solemn words cut him off from the customs and associations of his whole life, and identified him with a community of people whom his caste laws had taught him to despise and avoid. Then the missionary took a big pair of scissors and cut off the one lone strand of hair which all orthodox Hindus wear. After the service was over, Bapurao shook hands with his new friends and went off—for the first time in his mature life without his little stone god, which lay, prostrate with chagrin and indignation, beside the hair-lock on Bill's desk.

But this turned out to be only the beginning of the story. Next morning Bapurao came back and

asked for a wife. He had progressed in the ideals of his new faith, for he made no stipulation as to her origin. The main thing was to get fixed up soon. We therefore suggested Gitabai (Gee-ta-bye, equivalent to Miss Gita), a young and sprightly Bible woman of outcaste origin, a widow with one child. Bapurao liked the idea and asked us to broach the matter. I did so, and I was certain by her expressionless face that the suggestion appealed to her immensely, but she asked a night to think it over. I found afterwards that she had written that very afternoon to her relatives and had told them that she was going to marry Bapurao whether they agreed or not!

On the following Monday when we came down from the sleeping-porch we found Bapurao waiting for us in a very agitated frame of mind. He said the Wanis were after him and that he must take refuge here. Without so much as waiting for permission he slipped past us into Bill's office and hid there for the rest of the day.

The crowds began to swarm round the bungalow. We closed up the doors and windows. The leaders of the Wani community demanded to see Bapurao and declared that we were keeping him by force. We tried to persuade him to come out for a moment and assure his friends that everything had been done of his own free will. But he refused to budge. He knew their tricks, he said. The moment he would put his nose outside the

bungalow they would rush him and carry him off and make away with him in some way—possibly by undetectable poison. They then sent in all sorts of tempting messages—that his little stepson wanted to see him for a moment, that a favourite little girl was crying for him, etc. But Bapurao was adamant. Not only so, but he begged us to fetch Gitabai and have the wedding immediately, as it is much more difficult to take a man back into his caste if he has married an outcaste.

Bill rushed down on his bicycle to Gitabai's house, found she was willing to play up, and asked her to stroll up casually to the bungalow, as she did nearly every day. She did so, and we called in a few trustworthy Christians. We saw that the bungalow was securely fastened and we gathered in the guest-room, the most secluded room in the house, having taken the precaution to hang a dark curtain across the window.

Gitabai, whose monthly salary had been three dollars, wore a wedding *sari* that cost fifty dollars! It was a gorgeous purple silk affair with a heavy border of gold embroidery; and with this she wore a brick-coloured shawl which at least assured the outward gaiety of the ceremony. Our hearts were heavy with apprehension, for through the dark curtain we could indistinctly see figures prowling round the bungalow, and we wondered what would happen if they guessed what was going on inside.

When Bapurao and Gitabai were pronounced man and wife, the bridegroom went back and hid in Bill's office while the bride went down to her house to pack. How we were ever to get them out of Barispoor was a problem, for Bapurao absolutely refused to go by train, even under Bill's protection. He felt sure he would be overpowered and carried off.

More and more people came and patrolled the bungalow and compound, some of them genuinely distressed at this fall from grace, some merely curious, and a few decidedly hostile. They insisted that we were imprisoning their man against his will, so at last he agreed to talk with two of the most influential leaders of the Wani community, provided Bill stayed close at hand. First came a wealthy merchant. He sat in the guest-room while Bapurao continued to crouch in the adjoining office, and Bill took up his position in the open door between the two rooms. The visitor burst into tears and begged Bapurao not to bring such disgrace on his friends and fellow-caste men. Then he turned to Bill and said, "Sahib, don't take away this good man from us. He's one of our very best. If only you'll let him go, I'll promise you ten less important men!" Bill explained that we didn't want "ten less important men" and that it was a matter in which he himself had merely been an instrument—a matter which lay between Bapurao and his new God. After much useless weep-

ing and storming this visitor went away sorrowfully.

Then another friend came in, and immediately offered Bapurao five thousand rupees in cash and all the expenses of a big purification ceremony if only he would recant. But Bapurao merely shook his head and repeated over and over again "The step which is taken, is taken!" This meant that he had burned his boats.

When the crowds waiting to hear the verdict were informed that Bapurao stuck to his choice and that there was nothing doing, they began to cut up rough. Things looked ugly. It was a critical moment when Bill stepped out of the bungalow, addressed the hostile crowd, assured them that there was nothing more to be said or done, and requested them kindly to leave. As he spoke, he gently but firmly propelled them towards the garden gate, stood aside till the last one passed through, and then closed it and came back. To this day, I marvel there was no violence! If one stone had been thrown when he turned back towards the bungalow, we would have been in for a first-class riot. I presume that his coolness had taken them by surprise.

After much anxious cogitation we concocted a plan for getting the happy (?) couple out of Baris-poor. The bride took the evening train to the junction twenty-two miles down the line. Bapurao remained in the office. We ourselves went up to the

sleeping-porch as usual. Then, at two in the morning, when there was fine moonlight, Bill slipped along and fetched Redbird, the motorcycle. We had figured it all out that Redbird could not possibly get out of town without making a good lot of noise, and that there surely would be watchers who might attack it if they thought Bapurao was in the side-car. On the other hand, they would not mind it if Bill and I ran away at dead of night. They would simply come to the bungalow and "rescue" their friend. The main point, therefore, was to make them think that it was I in the side-car. So I fetched my big sun-hat and a green veil, and dressed up our stout and dusky friend to look like me!

My sensations are indescribable as I watched, from the verandah upstairs, the start of the little cavalcade. Bill, accompanied by the ludicrously-disguised Bapurao and by a man with a lantern, walked Redbird to the fork of the roads in front of the house, seated the runaway in the rickety old side-car, and started up the engine. How it roared and reverberated in the still night, as though on purpose to warn the entire population of the clandestine flight! And then, in his excitement, if Bill didn't stall the engine! I could have screamed.

At last they were off, and I watched the indistinct blur through the trees, and strained my ears to hear whether the engine suddenly stopped—which would probably mean an attack. But our op-

ponents had evidently been literally caught napping, for the chug-chug died steadily down in the distance, and I turned in to an anxious vigil, ardently wondering what might be in store for me—left unprotected in the bungalow with the probability that the Wanis might come in search of Bapuraao.

I must have fallen into a restless doze, for about six in the morning I was awakened by loud shouting near by. All the events of the previous day rushed over me, and I got up and flew to the porch window. There on the main road, half hidden by the trees, was an angry, gesticulating crowd of Indians, and in the middle of them I could dimly see a man with a sun-hat, and part of a cycle wheel. "Poor Bill!" thought I, "they've waylaid him on the way back. I must get help."

I ran to the side-window, flung it open, and hol-lered for the watchman.

"What on earth's the matter, Betty?" asked a sleepy voice behind me.

I jumped round. There lay Bill, safe and sound under his mosquito net!

"What? . . . Where? . . . Why? . . . Oh, how did you get here?" I gasped.

"Oh, easy enough. I had a non-stop run to the junction, gave the bridegroom over into the blushing bride's care, and scuttled back to bed before Barispoor was awake—or you!"

And we discovered later that the poor man with the sun-hat and the cycle was a mill-clerk sur-

rounded by a crowd of angry mill-strikers agitating for a raise in wages.

But we must cut Bapurao's long story short, although his troubles were by no means over. He and Gitabai stayed for some time in a neighbouring town, and then ventured back to Barispoor while we were away. With absolute heroism they stayed in Bapurao's old house, right in the Wani quarter, but his friends and relatives beat and kicked Gitabai, tore the cooking vessels out of her hand and threw them away, and did everything they could to make life impossible. The courageous Gitabai stuck it out, but one morning she woke to find her husband gone. The door and the windows were still fastened. A hole in the roof showed how he had been kidnapped. She went to her own people, and for months had no word as to whether her husband were dead or alive. And during that nightmare of a time she had a little still-born son. Then one day Bapurao appeared, pale and thin and in rags. He had run away from his captors, walked thirty miles to the railway, and borrowed money for a ticket.

By and by things began to calm down. But Bapurao was not happy. Although he had lost money and property, he still had enough to live on, but he had no occupation, and he would sit all day and brood on what he had suffered. He was too old and too little educated to make him either a

teacher or a preacher. His whole life and experience had been with grain and other commodities. So he started up a shop in another town, but the Wanis were warned against him, and he was boycotted and threatened.

And then, a strange turn of Fortune's wheel installed him as purchasing agent in a Christian boys' boarding school. With his thirty years' proficiency in the arts of buying and selling, he now caters for a family of eighty boys, getting at cheap rates excellent qualities of grain and spices and clarified butter and solidified treacle, and all the other queer ingredients that go into an Indian menu. And the still sprightly Gitabai is matron, and mothers the eighty boys and makes them stand round too, for Bapurao is too gentle to be a disciplinarian. They have no children of their own, but have adopted Gitabai's little nephew. When Bapurao comes back from the bazaar each day, it is a treat to see the little fellow run up to him and feel in all his pockets for the inevitable *baksheesh*—biscuit or candy or toy. And Bapurao's stolid old face lights up in a thousand kind and happy wrinkles.

Yes, Bapurao has accomplished that which Christ said was harder than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. He, a rich man, has indeed entered the kingdom of God. But to reach it he had to go through the deep waters. Now he is safe on solid ground. And I think he is the

happiest man in the Christian community. Not only so, but his contented face and his simple faith are a benediction to the people among whom he dwells.

IX

FAMINE, DISEASE, AND DEATH

NO wonder the Indian is fatalistic. Human life is so cheap, so uncertain; and the gods are so whimsical. To-day, a man is alive and well; to-morrow, he is suddenly cut off, and by nightfall all that remains of him is a handful of ashes. A baby's life suddenly snuffs out without apparent cause; but what of that? Half the babies born in India die before they are a year old. And what can be done about it? Nothing. If it be the will of the gods that a man should die, then die he must, whether he takes medicine-water or not. Disease and death are *nasheeb*, and nothing can avert them.

The autumn of 1918 was a nightmare to every one of us who lived through it in Western India. The usual rains having failed, the first crops likewise failed. The price of grain rose to figures unheard of previously, even in the worst famines. The measure in use is the *seer*—roughly two pounds—though it varies in different parts of the country. Thirty years ago grain was sold at thirty *seers* to the rupee. A few years ago it fell to ten. War conditions in 1917 reduced it to five, and in 1918 it actually fell to one and three-quarters! The result was wide-spread starvation.

The poor who, in normal times, have no extras that they can cut out in times of scarcity, simply went underfed, and the great majority of our Indian Christians belonged to this category. They have no margin even in the best of times, so when prices rise they have to reduce the irreducible. Everywhere we saw sunken cheeks, protruding bones, and a famished, yearning look in the eyes. Grain riots took place in several towns, aged folks died of starvation, and babies and young children were sold for a song.

Then, in the midst of this want, disease broke out and found easy victims in the great army of the underfed. Cholera and plague are familiar visitants, but an enemy deadlier than either of these made his appearance. Six million people died of influenza in India—which was two per cent. of the total population and just half the number that died from the same cause in the great round world. Young and old, rich and poor, caste and outcaste, Hindu and Mohammedan and Christian—all fell to the sickle of the implacable Harvester. And a great inarticulate cry went up to the brazen sky that persisted in looking down with cloudless callousness:

*“ And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling, cooped we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to IT for help—for It
As impotently moves as you or I.”*

In Barispoor influenza took a deadly toll. Out of a population of less than twenty thousand it claimed fifty per day, so that if it had continued at this rate the inhabitants would have been wiped out in about thirteen months. The Wanis, a small but rich and influential community of merchants, bury their dead; and as their cemetery lay beyond our bungalow, we saw all the funeral processions go past. In influenza time there were as many as seven a day. Gruelling as the sight was, it held a fascination for us that made us go out on to the verandah whenever we heard, far off, the melancholy tum-tum of the drums; for at their funerals, the Wanis use a haunting march produced by one big drum and a couple of kettle-drums beaten in a peculiar rhythm. First come the drummers and cymbal-players, and then the Wani priest in gaudy garments, and with his face hideously smeared with white ash. Behind him walk four men bearing on their shoulders a couple of bamboos to which is tied a chair-like frame. And on this frame sits . . . the corpse!

He is cross-legged, with his hands folded on his knees; and his head is tied to the back of the frame and thus kept steady. Above him waves a gay bunch of plantain leaves—a ruse, they say, to deceive any evil spirits that may be prowling round, and make them think the corpse is a live man carried in honour shoulder-high by his friends. Next comes a motley crowd of his acquaintances and

fellow-caste men, talking and laughing. About fifty yards still farther in the rear come the women, shrieking and wailing and beating their breasts. The chief mourner—wife or mother as the case may be—ought, if she is loyal and on to her job, to be so prostrate with grief that she can only stagger along with the support of her friends. The Wani grave is a niche reached by a three-foot shaft, and in this the corpse is placed in a sitting attitude. I never could pass the Wani cemetery without imagining the sight that would meet my eyes if a slice of earth three feet deep could be suddenly cut off and thus reveal a field closely packed with dead Wanis, each sitting cross-legged and contemplative in his niche like a stone Buddha.

But most Hindus burn their dead, and at the burning ghat which is in two sections—for the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans respectively—we have counted as many as eight funeral pyres blazing simultaneously. We often met in the streets a procession of men jostling along with a crude bier. The recumbent figure would be covered with a red cloth and sometimes sprinkled with flowers and coloured powder; and the dead face, ghastly with white ash, would loll from side to side distressingly. At the burning ghat the body is laid on a low pile of logs, and the nearest relative puts rice and water to the dead lips. More logs and fuel-cakes are piled on and round about. The priest mutters some incantations and then sprinkles

the whole pyre with kerosene oil, and applies a torch. The flames leap up as if in triumph, and when the fire begins to burn steadily the mourners move off. It will smoulder for many hours.

Right throughout that dreadful year we lived in an atmosphere of famine and disease and death and burial. We did not have to watch the Wani funerals or go to the burning ghats to know that death was all about us. We had it at our very doors and in our very compound. Marathas frequently got permission to burn their dead right in their own fields instead of at the ghats; thus we actually could smell burning flesh and see flickering funeral fires from our bungalow roof! We had to keep tight hold of our nerves during that trying autumn and winter, and it is a marvel that we kept both our physical and our mental health; for we were constantly going into insanitary homes, nursing influenza patients, and attending the funerals of both Christian and Hindu friends.

The great problem facing every missionary in famine-time is to save life and relieve want without pauperizing anybody. In some destitute cases there was nothing for it but to give food or cash, especially to old folks or any who were sick; but no able-bodied man, woman or child got anything at all without working for it. But we did help a lot by giving clothing. When people could earn only enough to buy a couple of flat breads per

day, you can imagine the state of their wardrobes. A generous check from America was transformed into a pile of clothes, and we had a great deal of pleasure in giving people back their self-respect.

One Saturday evening, for instance, we sent for some poor folks whom we had been hoping to help for some time—a widow with four young children and no income, who just picked up a day's work when and where she could get it; a young couple with two babies living on ten cents a day, a family of five living on sixteen cents a day. The incredulous delight on their faces was a treat, for we had kept the coming gifts secret, and not one of these recipients had been begging for clothes—a distinct recommendation to a missionary harassed day and night by petitions for gifts deserved and otherwise.

We said we must see how the new clothes looked, so the ladies retired to the south of the bungalow and the gentlemen to the north, and we heard suppressed chuckles and giggles from the garden during the delicious process of exchanging filthy rags for fresh new wrappings. Then they filed back. What a transformation, both of face and figure! I never realized so forcibly before the tremendous psychological effect of clothes; and I defy most folks, even poor, ignorant Indian outcasts, to be at their best spiritually when covered with dirty tatters. After the exhibition of fineries we had a short service of thanksgiving. The donor's photograph was admired with many *ohs*

and *ahs*. When we had finished, as we thought, a very old fellow said he would like to pray. He stood up with much rustling of his new possessions, bared his head, proceeded to thank God for His mercies and to call down blessings on the kind donor and also on us for our instrumentality. Then emotion got the better of him, and the tears coursed down his ancient cheeks while his quavery old voice rose higher and higher into a wail of gratitude.

We had a row of "sparrows" on the verandah every day—beaming, bright-eyed youngsters who came at the school interval for a flat cake of bread with an occasional treat in the shape of nuts or meat or pudding from our own table. No leftovers have any chance in a missionary's home, especially in famine time! It was just quaint to see my "sparrows" squatting in a row tucking into their eats and protecting them, with squeals of delight, from the predatory puppy.

One day I went along to the mill to nurse a poor Christian woman, and after attending to her I was asked to step into the next house to see a sick Hindu man. He was frightfully ill and in delirium, so I hurried back to Barispoor and fetched the best doctor available—who, although an unqualified man, was very clever and kept a good stock of medicines.

The doctor examined the patient, left some medi-

“Sahib, mudumsahib,” she panted, “there’s a sick man lying by the roadside, just beyond the bungalow. I think he’s dying.”

Bill jumped up and ran out with his water-bottle and a stimulant, while I rushed to the back of the bungalow and sent the bullock-cart after him. He found the stranger unconscious, so lifted him into the cart and brought him to a room in the compound. He was obviously far gone, but we applied what simple remedies we had, and sent for the doctor.

The poor fellow sank rapidly, and tried hard to say something. We bent over him and strained our ears, hoping to find out who he was and perhaps get some message for his relatives. But the dying man, in his delirium, was only asking for a cigarette! It was pathetic to see him draw his last breath—a stranger among strangers. But there was no clue to his identity except his name “Ganpat W.” sewed in crude embroidery on his little cloth bag.

We sent over and informed the police, and received a thoroughly characteristic reply. “Who is the man? What disease did he die of? Why is he in your compound? What are we to do? What is your wish in the matter?” We replied that we wanted them to do their duty and take charge of the case. Finally they sent two policemen to guard the body as it lay in a little room back of the bungalow.

All through the night we could hear the reverberating tom-tom of the big drum that was beaten through the streets in token that an unknown man had died. But no one turned up to make enquiries or to claim our stranger; so the police held an inquest next morning and we handed over to them the dead man's meagre little possessions—his earring with two imitation pearls, his copper charm from his neck, a brass bowl, and the black cloth bag containing a lime-box, a nut cracker, some pieces of betel-nut, and a few coins.

When the bearers were returning from the burial they met an old man, a stranger who had just stepped off the train. He asked them who had been buried.

“A stranger,” they replied, “a Maratha.”

“A young man of about twenty-five? Don't tell me it was.”

“Yes, old man.”

“My son, my son,” he wailed. “It must have been my son. Show me his things.”

They took him to the police-station and he recognized his son Ganpat's belongings. Then they brought him to us to hear all the details we could give him—not very many. Poor old fellow! How he mourned! He sobbed out the story—how the family crops had failed for want of the rain, and how Ganpat had gone down to Bombay to try and find work. But word came that he was ill with influenza, so his old father scraped together

enough money to bring him home, and went down to Bombay for him. But at that very time the sick Ganpat had been seized with a desire to die in his own village and had started out from Bombay. His train and his father's must have crossed somewhere—like *Évangeline's* canoe and that of her lover Basil. On reaching Bombay, the father learned that Ganpat had gone, so hurried after him, only to meet on the street the men who had buried his boy—buried him as a stranger. Ganpat had evidently got off the train the previous morning and had been trying to walk to his village when he collapsed near our bungalow.

Our hearts ached with futile sympathy for the stricken father as he went off, beating his breast and wailing for his beloved son, as of old, David mourned for Absalom.

Back of our bungalow was a group of ten houses with a *patil*—headman. He was a Maratha and was very friendly with us. When he took influenza his mother sent for us. We passed through his yard, filled with tethered animals and sprawling babies and yelping pariah dogs. The door was cautiously opened, revealing nothing but a huge cloth stretched from wall to wall.

“Where is the *patil*?” I asked in amazement.

With much ceremony and with obvious hesitation on the part of the old grandmother, a corner of the cloth was lifted and, by peering under a

baby's swing cot, I dimly perceived a form huddled against the wall. Crawling on hands and knees I reached the *patil's* hand, found he had high fever, and called for cold water. With much grunting and grumbling his grandmother fetched some in a brass vessel, and I applied a wet cloth to his brow. To do this, I had to push back his huge turban. (Imagine lying ill with fever and having ten yards of yard-wide cloth wrapped round your aching head!) The grandmother snorted with indignation, and the moment I removed the compress she officiously readjusted the turban.

I then suggested that the curtain be taken down and the sick man moved out near the door where he might get some fresh air. But this was too much for the old lady. She could contain herself no longer. She broke out into vigorous invective. To think of suggesting fresh air when the poor fellow was ill . . . when he had high fever . . . when he ought to be kept warm and out of the wind! What was I thinking of? *What did I mean?* Fortunately the *patil* sided with me and ordered the curtain to be taken down; but I knew perfectly well that the minute my back was turned it would go up again. Then I was asked to look at the sick baby, and had again to crouch under the cot and crawl towards another corner of this suffocating hole. I did all I could to persuade them to get a doctor. They shook their heads. This was *nasheeb*.

A few days later Bill and I went out for a stroll in the evening to try and get rid of the cobwebs of depression. On the way home we took a short cut through the *patil's* fields back of our house. On the edge of one field there was a fire of straw and leaves—as we thought at the distance—burning up brightly in rivalry to a particularly bright sunset. But on approaching it we made the gruesome discovery that it was the exit from this mundane sphere of the obstreperous old lady with the aversion to fresh air!

A few days later the baby's life snuffed out, and then the *patil's*. Ignorance and prejudice had done their work, and in that household of ten people, seven died. Out of respect we went to the *patil's* funeral which was held at night by the light of a big gas-lamp. We sat on the grass a little way off, and a man stepped forward and politely suggested that we might get our clothes soiled, as we were sitting on the very spot where a body had been burned the previous night!

On returning to the house we found the women wailing in a heartrending fashion; and the broken-hearted mother threw her arms round my neck and sobbed out her grief. It seemed to comfort her to have some one near her with a larger vision and with a sure belief in a life beyond where she would meet her loved ones. I never realized more poignantly the unspeakable inspiration of that blessed hope in the hereafter that Christ gave us.

X

CHIEFLY ABOUT WEDDINGS

AFTER a tiring journey by train and a long trek from the station, we have arrived at the 'Travellers' Bungalow which we hope to make our headquarters for a long tour. The caretaker, an evil-faced villain, comes out and informs us that the bungalow is not inhabitable because of a species of crawling insect—very dangerous—infesting the walls.

It does not sound inviting, but we have no other shelter in sight, and from the man's attitude we have a shrewd suspicion that he does not want the bother of visitors. We vote to brave the strange zoological specimen and insist on his opening up the bungalow. We find only a few hairy caterpillars sprawling over the walls! We have them swept down and we proceed with our unpacking while our faithful Krishna is busy in the cook-room and hustles round the grouchy caretaker to fetch water and wood. By the time supper is ready the darkness is falling, and we eat at a rickety table set out in front of the bungalow, where we can watch the gorgeous colours of the sunset.

In the neighbouring village plague was raging, and the people were fleeing to the open prairie where they erect shelters of iron sheets, straw, leaves, skins, rags, and other odds and ends, supported on rough wooden posts or on branches of trees. For several months these poor refugees will shiver in the cold winter nights in these meagre huts, and only when the plague rats have deserted the village will they go back to their houses.

As we sat at dinner we saw the bullock-carts roll past on the road near the bungalow. Their freight was shabby and pathetic. A box with grain, a sack of cooking pots, a few remnants of clothing, and a woman and children perched on top of them—these were the average possessions of the fugitives. A thunderstorm came on, and flashes of lightning would suddenly illuminate the whole weird scene, and silhouette on a momentary flaming background a group of hurrying, homeless figures, while between the peals of thunder we would hear the wail of frightened infants.

Exhausted by our long day's journey we turned in for what we fondly hoped would be a restful night. We were rudely awakened by the rain streaming through innumerable cracks and cranies in the straw roof. There was not one dry spot in the room big enough to hold the two camp cots, so we beat a hasty retreat to the verandah. We were dry there but there was still no peace, and

we discovered why the caretaker had been so unwilling to have the even tenor of his days disturbed—namely, he was in the habit of stabling all his live stock on the bungalow verandah. We were accosted successively by a buffalo calf, a bull, several dogs, and then the mother buffalo in search of her calf. Next we heard noises inside the bungalow, and Bill had to get up and rescue the carrots in our provision basket from an army of rats. He had just got back to his cot when I heard a smothered exclamation.

“What’s the matter, Bill?” I called.

“Oh, nothing much this time! Just a rat in my bed!”

We had just broken up camp. The first bullock-cart had started off with about half our paraphernalia. Bill was helping to load the second, and when it had got under way he and I would follow on our cycles. I sat down on a camp-chair and had a look at a home paper.

Just then two Indian women came along with enormous loads on their heads. They were Marwaris—a rich trading community, and they wore voluminous pleated skirts (some of these skirts actually measure thirty yards at the hem!) and were laden with jewellery. They stopped and looked at us, first at me, then at Bill, then back at me, and discussed us with each other in loud tones. Then they blurted out, “Look here, woman, why

are you sitting idle and letting your husband do all the work?"

I laughed and explained that I *had* been working, but that it was the custom in our country for the men-folks to do heavy jobs like roping boxes, etc. They shook their heads in disapproval. Then they turned to Bill. "Sahib, why don't you make her get up and work?"

Bill, who was enjoying the affair immensely, also explained the strange customs of white men, and ended up by saying, "So, you see, I'm very glad to finish the packing and let my wife rest."

They looked at him as if he were a poor fool. "H'm," they snorted, "then what on earth did you marry her for?"

Maruti, the monkey-god's temple, with no windows and only one door, serves as the village school. Opposite the door grins the ugly stone image mouthing hideously at the pupils day by day.

To-day, a white man sits on the verandah surrounded by squatting figures in flowing white garments and multi-coloured turbans. The palaver proceeds leisurely until the crowd reaches the proper psychological point of interest and friendliness, when the stranger broaches the subject of the oppressed widow and the unjust stewards. The chief object in coming to this particular village is to enquire into a case where a widow is being cheated of her field by her two brothers-in-law.

By and by the sahib draws from two unprejudiced witnesses the right version of the story. He actually persuades one of the brothers to confess his dishonesty. And then—incredible development!—he suggests that a document be drawn up stating the facts. The brother and ten important villagers sign it. Look at them! They come one by one, hold out their thumb for the village teacher to ink it with his quill pen, and then make a great daub on the paper.

Meanwhile, raucous shrieks rend the air as the vixenish wife of the unrepentant brother rushes out of her house near by and threatens all who sign. One old man shakes his head and then dramatically draws down his moustaches and ears. This throws the crowd into fits of laughter, for it symbolizes what he expects would happen to him if he dared to put his name to that damnatory document. Finally, however, he screws up his courage, and the evil-visaged woman goes off grimacing horribly and breathing out threatenings and slaughter.

The missionary then gets in a good talk about the Master and the Master's love of justice. The people of that village, who had never been visited by any white man before, are mightily impressed with this strange new religion that demands disinterested fair play for poor and rich alike, for friend and stranger alike. They beg the missionary to come again and tell them more about it.

We just had time for a hurried cup of tea in the early morning before the crowds began to arrive.

We were camping out in a Travellers' Bungalow at the "back of beyond." The nearest village was about half a mile away and lay on the farther side of a miniature valley. We could see our visitors in ones and twos and threes emerge from the grey mud walls of the village, walk down the path to the well in the hollow, and climb up the nearer side and make straight for the bungalow. Their white clothes and red turbans made bright patches against the colourless background of barren land—lively patches too, for they were all gesticulating emphatically. And as they came nearer we could see how determined their faces were. These were obviously men who were not to be trifled with, men who had come to see what was what and to act accordingly.

They squatted on our verandah, and I knew only too well that we were in for a whole-day stunt—and a day to be lived literally in the public eye. Only one room in the bungalow had been available, and this had to act as sitting-room, dining-room, bedroom, boudoir, office, and reception-room. It had two doors and two windows that provided excellent points of vantage from which our inquisitive visitors could view our every movement and all the queer stuff that the missionary sahib lugs round with him—clothes and bedding

and stores and camp dishes, to say nothing of tools and spare wheels and other motor accessories that had to be stowed for safety in our one limited room.

The matter in hand was not the performance of a wedding ceremony as we had expected it to be, but the question of *to be* or *not to be*. The bride, Limbi, had been educated by us for years; but two years ago, without our knowledge or consent, she had been betrothed to a poor and ignorant country bumpkin of sixteen, named Keru. As a betrothal in India is almost as sacred as marriage it seemed unwise to break it off, so we delayed the wedding until now. But all of a sudden the little bride-to-be changed her mind. She wanted to marry, she said, but she wanted a better match than Keru!

I secretly sympathized with her, for Keru lives in a room measuring five feet by eleven, along with his father and two uncles and two brothers and a sister; and the chief reason for pushing on the wedding was a desire on the part of the older members of the family to get a "woman about the house" (aged fourteen!) to do the cooking for the entire household. However, a promise is a promise, and Keru was no whit poorer and his house no whit smaller now than two years ago when the match was made.

Limbi and her foolish mother kept out of sight in their little house a stone's throw away from the

bungalow, of which the mother is the caretaker. The people on the verandah were all the bridegroom's friends and relatives. They were in very bad humour, for a broken betrothal is a disgrace to the whole community. Not only so, but they had gone to huge expense and had made elaborate preparations. A cloth bundle was dumped down before us and opened out to display two *saris*, a jacket, a pair of silver armlets—all for Limbi; two new *dhoters* for Keru; and ten silver rupees. The clothes were the minimum required for any respectable wedding and had cost twenty rupees (about seven dollars). With the ten silver rupees in hard cash, this made an outlay of thirty rupees. But not a penny of this had been paid for. The bridegroom-elect had taken them "on tick" from a rich merchant, and in return had pledged himself for two years of overtime work. This goes one better than furnishing a house for one's bride on the installment-payment plan!

The atmosphere was tense, so we tried to relieve it by a little play-acting. I took up the silver armlets, showed them to sahib, bared my unadorned upper arm, and reproached him with not having given *me* any silver armlets on *my* wedding day. I sulked and pouted and threatened to bake him no more bread till he paid up. (This is the Indian woman's one weapon for getting what she wants out of her husband.) Sahib pretended to be much perturbed and repentant, and the crowd

went into fits, for nothing amuses them more than when the white sahib and mudumsahib "act Indian."

Then we sat and gossiped with them and asked after the numerous additions to their families. You cannot blame us for losing count of the young hopefuls when some of the parents themselves lose count. I have often seen an Indian woman, when I had asked her the number of her children, begin and tick them off on her fingers, corrected frequently by her better half or by her neighbours standing by. Then our friends plied us with questions, for all of them have relatives in our town—sons or sons-in-law who have gone to work in the cotton mills. And many of them have children in our boarding schools.

Ratan's grandmother beams when I tell her he has been promoted to our new Middle School and has got a new coat and cap as *baksheesh* (the first he has ever possessed in his twelve years of life).

Solomon's father, appropriately named David, tries to hide his pride when I tell him how well his boy is doing and what a talent he has for drawing.

Yeshwant's father smiles when he hears that Yeshwant is now as tall as the sahib.

But now the pastor arrives, and the real business of the day begins. It is clear that the betrothal had been a *pucca* one, that is, real and binding. Everybody is agreed on that score. Now,

why has Limbi changed her mind? The pastor and an elderly elder and the missionary-sahib are deputed to go and interview her and her mother. They do so for an hour without result. Then I am called for, and spend a fruitless hour alone with her, trying to get to the bottom of her fathomless mind. Limbi is a pretty and rather pert little chit with the blackest skin and the whitest teeth imaginable. But to-day there was no gleam of ivory. She was sulking, and her black lips were clamped together like the two halves of an ebony oyster shell. The one and only word she would utter was "nukko."

Now, "nukko" is the most provoking negative I have so far discovered in any language. In polite conversation it may mean "No, thank you"; or "I would rather not"; or "Please don't." But it also has various shades of emphasis such as "Nothing doing"; "I shall *not*"; "Not on your life"; and other degrees of refusal which in our complicated English language need so many words to express. So the conversation was decidedly one-sided.

"Will you marry Keru?"

"Nukko."

"Why don't you want to marry him?"

"Nukko."

"Then you must go back to school with us to-morrow."

"Nukko."

"Then we'll send you away somewhere else."

“Nukko.”

It was a deadlock. And meanwhile the visitors on the other side of the verandah were getting impatient; so I gave Limbi an ultimatum that she must either marry Keru now or come back with us to school the next day, and I hurried off without having time to hear another “nukko.”

The bridegroom's party was furious. They denounced Limbi, denounced her mother, vowed they'd go to law about it. We made what we thought a very fair offer. We asked them to wait three months, and see what Limbi's attitude would be then. If she still refused to marry Keru, we promised to buy all the wedding garments and ornaments. But they would not hear of it. It was to be now or never. If Limbi refused to play up now, at once, they would go right off and marry Keru to a Hindu girl and in Hindu style.

There was nothing for it but to let them get their steam off. Their pride was hurt, and pride is a precious possession of the downtrodden outcaste. The bridegroom's aunt let herself go and burst into tears, and shrieked with rage and impotence as she snatched up the bundle of wedding clothes with a flourish of finality. They finally went off entirely disgruntled, and without even saying “Salaam” to us, for they thought we should have put pressure on Limbi and simply have married her off, whether or no.

We asked the pastor and a husky elder to come

early the next morning and help us to get Limbi into the car—by force if necessary, as it would have been criminal, in the circumstances, to leave her unprotected as she was. It was now two o'clock, so we sat down to what should have been our eleven o'clock breakfast. We invited the pastor, the teacher and his wife and two children, and the husky elder. Accommodation and dishes alike were limited. The string bed and a tin trunk and the stone floor were all utilized for sitting on. Then the men-folks did business matters—sahib taking numerous notes about numerous things to be done—repairs and supplies to be looked after, such-and-such letters to be written to such-and-such officials, and so on. A respite would have been very welcome to me, but the teacher's wife and I had to have a chat. She is a brave woman. She and her husband are well educated and are used to town life with its civilization and comfort. Yet they are willing, for a very small salary, to bury themselves in an ignorant and unlovely village, miles from any medical help or from Indians of their grade. They teach a school for children of a dozen different castes, and they are the friends and advisers of every one—high caste and low caste alike. I think they are absolutely heroic, and I was just glad to have the wife pour out all her trials and troubles.

This lasted till about five-thirty, and just as they were about to start for their home three miles

away, the pastor decided he would go and see Limbi and remind her she was to leave with us in the morning.

Five minutes later sahib rushes in with the most excited face. "Guess," says he, "just guess what's happened."

I think of snakes and scorpions and other "excitements" that we have experienced in that very bungalow. "Tell me quick," I cry. "What on earth has happened?"

"Limbi wants to marry Keru to-morrow!"

I simply would not believe it. But so it was. Limbi and her mother were standing round the corner, all smiles. I didn't ask what had happened or why, though I felt like giving her a good shaking, and I thanked my stars, as I frequently do, that Fate has not cast my lot among Indian girls and women of Limbi's mentality.

We sent a special messenger post haste to the bridegroom's village and fixed the wedding for the next morning at eight o'clock.

And the next morning the same crowd came back, strolling down into the valley and up towards our bungalow again. But what a transformation! Every one smiling, every one jolly and joking. The happy (?) little couple were tied up on the verandah—literally tied up, for a corner of Limbi's *sari* was knotted to a corner of Keru's scarf, and as they shook hands after the ceremony she had to follow Keru meekly round, willy-nilly.

But she didn't mind now. There were no more sulks, not a single "nukko"! She was smiling and complacent and very conscious of the new silver armlets just visible above her elbows, and of the string of black beads tied round her neck—the Indian equivalent of a wedding ring. And the two witnesses who signed the marriage certificate were the Indian pastor and the husky elder whom we had expected, at just about that hour of the day, to be lifting a struggling Limbi into our perky little Ford, en route for the Mission school!

But such is life in India, and such is the wayward way of an Indian maid.

The eternal feminine, you say? Maybe.

XI

PAYING OUR RESPECTS TO THE “MOTHER OF EARTH”

WHAT a grand and glorious little lady she is, just two feet high, with a shiny black stone face, a shimmering silk *sari*, a high gold crown, a rich nose-ring, and any amount of gold necklaces and garlands!

But you had better make haste and bow down to her, and, of course, you have brought her an expensive offering. For she is the great goddess Ambabai who can bring rain or keep it away, who can send murrain on the cattle and blight on the crops, who can make sick folks well and well folks sick, who can wipe out a whole family at one fell stroke or make the barren woman fruitful.

She even helped a missionary sahib to kill a deer! Bill and I had paid her a visit in her great temple at Tulsipoor, and on leaving had bought a few curiosities—a rosary made of *tulsi* wood, some strings of shells such as “holy” men wear, and one of Ambabai’s bangles, such as Hindu women and children wear to bring them her favour. It was a little black glass bangle with yellow spots painted on it—the whole thing most probably made in Austria but mighty powerful when bought in faith and in the name of Ambabai, even though

it only cost one cent. It was too small to go over my hand, and we had no safe place to put such a fragile thing, so I slipped it over the muzzle of the rifle as it stood upright in the car. Well, you would hardly believe it, but we had only driven a few miles from the sacred city when . . . sh! . . . there went a lovely black buck sauntering across the road ahead of us! And within twenty minutes that same black buck was riding along on the footboard of the car, with a bullet through his spine. Ambabai, of course! How else can you account for it, seeing that the sahib had previously used up six good bullets and six strong expressions in vain!

Ambabai is evidently worth visiting, so come along. She lives in a quaint town named Tulsipoor—the town of the Tulsi-plant, the sweet balsam, which is sacred in India. Tulsipoor stands on a strikingly beautiful and unusual plateau. After miles and miles of absolutely flat country, a rocky ridge looms into view and swells in volume until it dominates the whole landscape. Its rugged outline, from which a graceful temple spire protrudes heavenwards, changes constantly as the road winds up the precipitous hillside. And then, as the last bend brings you up with a swing on to the plateau, you look back and see the magnificent plain lying three hundred feet below you, and stretching far away into purple depths that merge with the sky. It is little wonder that in this flat and barren land,

men lifted their eyes to these arresting hills and thought to worship their deities from these points of vantage. Ardent admirers of Ambabai have, from generation to generation, added to her original modest little shrine, so that now her imposing temple with its numerous courtyards and numerous "side-shows" stretches away down the hillside towards the level plain.

After traversing various narrow streets we come to the large main entrance and enter a large gate. You may go down the first few flights of steps with your shoes on, but now when you approach near the shrine proper you must take them off and leave them with an attendant. The sun-baked pavement feels scorching on your stockinged soles. Be careful in descending this next long flight. The steps are very steep. They are also extremely slippery, partly because of the thousands of pilgrims that yearly pass over them in search of comfort and help, and partly because of the numerous silver coins pounded into them and worn smooth. Yes, thousands of dollars' worth of good Indian money—rupees and half-rupees, and four-anna bits and two-anna bits—finds a resting-place in the steps and walls of Ambabai's temple. If you wonder how they are fixed in, just look over there at that old man squatting on the ground and chiselling out little hollows of different sizes to receive prospective offerings.

And now, as you descend cautiously with your

hand on the shaky wooden rail, look over to the right and notice that high stone pillar with numerous projections. It is a light pillar. On special days every one of those brackets is filled with oil and has a lighted cotton wick floating in it and giving out a pretty little twinkle. Then, just below the pillar is an open door in what appears to be merely a white wall. Out comes an old woman with a brass pot of water which she pours over the bush of tulsi growing in a white earthen flower-pot on a pedestal. In she goes again and comes back with a flat brass plate with red and yellow powder which she likewise sprinkles on it, while her lips move in prayer. You see, she is not only watering the tulsi but she is worshipping it, for the sweet balsam is a goddess to all Indian women in these parts. A bush of it grows outside practically every house, and it is a vital part of the devotions of the womenfolks to tend it.

In the courtyard below are open shops displaying red and yellow powder, grainstuffs, garlands, fruit, pictures of various gods and goddesses. Then another long flight of steps leads to the really important temple court. In a cage-like enclosure, very reminiscent of wild-beast cages in the menagerie, are mysterious figures draped in white cloth—the wooden animals on which Ambabai occasionally goes for a ride. She is a changeable little lady and must have a varied repertory to choose from.

And now look up at this great carved spire. Climb up on a neighbouring roof, if you like, and study the detail—the rows of elephants and horses with their quaint little riders, the cross-legged gods in the corner turrets, the equestrian deities in the niches of the higher row, and the wealth of carved flowers and spirals and conventional designs. The whole mass is coloured in crude reds and blues and yellows, picked out in gold. It may well be gaudy, for it stands directly above the holy of holies that contains the blessed image of the “Mother of Earth.”

First walk into this pillared court, dark and very old. It takes a moment or two to realize that the pillars are elaborately carved. In one corner is a silver image of the god Shunker, a relative of Ambabai. The Hindu is uncommonly conservative in most things, but he takes a wide view of the merits of numerous gods, and he often sticks in a few images of other gods in the temple courts dedicated to some particular one, and thus saves time and energy by giving his lesser deities a perfunctory obeisance *en passant*. In this case Shunker is quite secondary; so you enter a queer octagonal room hung with many mirrors on its walls in lieu of pictures, and with many large glass globes pendent from its roof. On one side an eager attendant will invite you to peep at the large wooden bedstead with rich coverings where Ambabai reposes at stated festivals.

And now for the holy of holies. Crowds are pressing forwards and backwards through a narrow door. With some trepidation you elbow your way across the threshold into a small dark room with open oil lamps vilifying the air with smoke. On a high plinth stands Ambabai, so close that you could touch her—if you dared! Hasn't she a kind of leer, or is it only the shadow falling on her polished black face as an ardent admirer holds a taper close to her, to let you have a good look at Her Majesty. And is there not a suspicion of a leer on the faces of some of the men standing round? "And Ambabai really helps you?" you ask a fine, tall Brahman boy with an intellectual face. "Of course," he replies. "Who else would?"

There is certainly no leer on the faces of the women worshippers, only reverence and adoration, yes, and hope. There, that young woman with the hunted look—surely she is an Indian Hannah praying her god to have pity on her because of the other wife's taunts. And here comes another Hannah, happy in the realization of her hopes, come to pay her vows by dedicating her child to the great "Mother of Earth." And you think of little Samuel being consecrated to the service of the living God. And this poor child? Alas, she is to be given over to be "a daughter of Ambabai." Now, just exactly what does that mean?

We first heard of Ambabai's daughters when touring up in our district. We were introduced to Gigibai, a fine young woman of about eighteen, the daughter of the caretaker of a 'Travellers' Bungalow. With her was a young man of about her own age.

"And this is your husband, I suppose?" I asked.

"Oh, no. How could I have a husband? I am one of Ambabai's daughters."

Being still green at that time, we were completely mystified, so had to ask what that implied. It seems that Gigibai's mother, when still a Hindu, took a severe swelling on her neck, and in order to get it cured went to Tulsipoor and promised Ambabai that in return for being made well she would dedicate her next daughter to Ambabai. The plan seemed to work. The swelling disappeared, and not long afterwards Gigibai was born. Her mother immediately took her to the temple and dedicated her to Ambabai.

"And that means—what?" I enquired.

"Oh, it means that I can never have a husband—a *married* husband, you understand. I must be ready to live with any man who asks me—but only one at a time. So you see this man that I have now is not my husband." (We irresistibly thought of the woman of Samaria—"And he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.")

In some trepidation I asked how many "temporary husbands" she had had?

“ Oh, this fellow is my first. He and I are fond of each other; so we have lived together about a year now.”

You can imagine how we wished we might save this lovely young girl from a long succession of “temporary husbands.” As it happened, her father had become a Christian, and she herself and her partner were very much interested in Christianity. We saw to it that they learned more about it; and a happy day came when Gigibai and her temporary husband both became Christians—which of course exonerated Gigibai from her mother’s hideous vow for her. They were married according to Christian rites and are now a respectable couple, with two lovely children.

And now look again at Ambabai’s sinister face. Don’t you feel a little triumphant since you know that at least one of her “daughters” has been stolen from her? But then the thought rushes over you that Gigibai was only one, out of so many hundreds or thousands. Do you see those jolly little girls dancing up and down the broad flights of steps? These also are Ambabai’s daughters—but attached to the temple. They look happy and care-free now; but later on they will find that their poor misguided mothers dedicated them, in the name of religion, to the vilest of vocations.

And all of a sudden the stifling air and the stench in that little shrine become overpowering. You turn away from the jeering black face and hurry

out to God's open air. In the courtyard, just beside the shrine, the birds are twittering on the branches of an ancient tree. You sit down on a stone step and try to recover your mental equilibrium. Somehow, these lines of van Dyke's flash into mind:

*"Lost, long ago, that garden bright and pure,
Lost, that calm day too perfect to endure,
And lost the child-like love, that worshipped
and was sure!*

*For men have dulled their eyes with sin,
And dimmed the light of heaven with doubt,
And built their temple walls to shut Thee in,
And framed their iron creeds to shut Thee out."*

And you think of ancient India with its worship of the sun and moon and wind, and other clean, elemental things, now degenerated into graven images of gods and goddesses, many of whom are vulgar and vicious and worshipped with revolting rites. You look at the constant line of pilgrims from all parts of India, pressing into the shrine and coming out glorified after their visit to the little black stone image. And a great wave of depression sweeps over you, for in all that great, holy city, there is not a single Christian light burning, not a Christian man, woman or child, to point the hungry and credulous heart of the pilgrims to "some better thing."

XII

COMMUNION SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY

A BLAZING mid-day in mid-winter in mid-India. A crude country road wending its wilful way between two villages at the "back of beyond." A comical cavalcade heading for church service.

A white woman, sheltered by blue glasses, a sun-hat, and a parasol, sits in a chair which is fastened to two long bamboo poles and shouldered by four Indian men. A fifth man trots alongside carrying a bundle which contains several kinds of sweet-meats, a Horlick's Malted Milk bottle filled with raisin water, a loaf of white bread, and an unbreakable thermos flask. A white man on foot brings up the rear.

Never before have I experienced the sensation of being mistaken for a corpse. But it so happens that the Lingayet sect carry their dead shoulder-high in similar fashion, with the body gaily decked out and propped up in a sitting posture, and the head fastened to the back of a chair-like frame. The only difference in my case (from a distance) was the substitution of a parasol for the regulation bunch of plantain leaves which ought to have waved above my dead head. I therefore took the precaution to wiggle my parasol vigorously when approaching any onlookers, in order to testify to the liveliness of the apparent corpse.

The convoy, being unusual in this part of the country, caused a mixture of amazement and consternation to man and beast alike. In one place it was the last straw to an already balky bullock drawing a plough. The bearers lowered me hastily with a bump, and we had to stand motionless by the side of the road while the owner disentangled the terrified animal from its traces and let it bolt past us.

It sounds simple to be carried in a chair—a sort of superior manner of gliding through space; but as a matter of fact it was like riding a tricky horse. The untrained bearers proceeded at an irregular trot, no two of them in step. Whenever a shoulder grew tired, its owner promptly raised his end of the pole clear over his head to the other shoulder. These aberrations occurring frequently and at spasmodic intervals, my meditations would be rudely interrupted by a sudden lurch towards any one of the four corners of the chair, and my heart would go pit-a-pat until the normal balance was regained. Yet I found this an excellent mode of viewing the countryside and of observing the countryfolks as they passed us on the road or stopped in their field work to gaze at us.

On the edge of the village we skirt a broad, shallow pool where most of the population seems to be washing itself or its clothes, and in which bullocks, buffaloes and goats are also disporting themselves. Under a spreading *neem*—not a chestnut-



A GROUP OF CHRISTIANS—ENTIRELY FROM THE OUTCASTES.

tree—the village smithy stands. We recognize it by the huge pair of bellows worked by a chain, a stick, and a pulley. Some youngsters stand close by watching the big wheel-rim lying in the coals, glowing red-hot. They want to see the sparks fly when the smith will come and haul it out and start hammering it.

Outside the next house a woman squats on the ground making fuel-cakes. She mixes straw and manure and plenty of water, pats out a round flat cake, and then daubs it by a dexterous turn of hand on to the wall of her house. Here it will dry in the sun and make excellent fuel.

Next door to this, the family cooking is in progress. In one corner of the little porch sits a daughter or daughter-in-law of the house doing the grinding. With her left hand she takes a quantity of grain and pours it into the small hole in top of the upper millstone, while her right hand grasps the wooden handle and propels it round and round and round and round. She meanwhile sings a grinding ditty—grinding in more ways than one, for it is hardly less screechy than the screechy millstones. These grinding ditties, unintelligible to the ordinary listener, have been handed down through countless generations. Her mother sits at the other end of the porch doing the cooking on an open fireplace. It is fascinating to watch her take a handful of millet meal, mix it with a little water on a wooden platter, knead it, and roll it out into

a thin flat cake, which she then takes between her hands held vertically in the attitude of praying, and pats round and round till it is just the right consistency. Then she quickly throws it on an iron plate on the fire where she will brown it first on one side and then on the other. A pile of newly-baked breads stands in a basket beside her. These unseasoned millet breads are the staple food of millions in Western India and are usually eaten with well-spiced vegetables. We may be perfectly sure that our five bearers have each a few such breads tied up in their little cloth bundles for their mid-day lunch.

But now we turn a corner, and a camel lying tethered in his owner's yard scrambles to his feet with a startled grunt, stretches out his ungainly neck, and stamps on the ground with a ridiculous air of indignant enquiry. And just beyond him and outside the village gate stands the temple of Maruti, the monkey-god and the patron of villages. As we pass his open door we catch a glimpse of his hideous, leering stone image daubed with red paint, with his long tail curled up towards his head, and with pathetic little oblations of flowers and cocoanuts spread before it.

We leave the precincts of the village and head for the open country. Just here it is bare and brown, but we soon come to cotton fields. The bushes are of a low species averaging two feet high, and they have evidently been picked. Only

a few stray bolls still stick to them or lie scattered on the ground. We remember the snow-like mountains of raw cotton which we saw heaped up outside the ginning mills in the town we passed through yesterday. Then the road winds "among the fields of yellow, yellow corn," the corn being the *jawari*, a species of millet known in some parts of America as "Kaffir corn." The stalks grow five or six feet high and are topped by a clump of small, bead-like grains, a thousand or so to the head. Though the fields look like our own corn fields from a distance, the illusion is spoiled by the scarecrow—a resplendent figure in brilliant turban in place of the familiar tattered hat and old pipe, and also by little platforms of straw supported on four sticks, where the farmer or his hireling sits all day and backs up the scarecrow by frightening off the birds.

The heat has been trying so far, but now a welcome oasis of green breaks the monotony of the shadeless land. We soon enter a mango grove and enjoy the shelter of the enormous bushy trees with their glossy green leaves and their fragrant, spirea-like blossoms. We stop and rest a moment by the well which accounts for this luxuriance of growth, and our human horses take the opportunity to water themselves. We watch with interest the old-fashioned mode of irrigation still in progress. A dozen bullocks, yoked in three groups of two pairs each, amble down a slope and thereby draw

up the water in three huge leathern buckets which, on reaching the top of the well, suddenly open out at their lower extremity and let the water rush down through earthen runnels to the thirsty fields. Then the animals are backed up the slope again while the empty buckets wobble down into the well for another load. The driver assists operations by occasional yells and whacks, by twisting of tails and by a plaintive sing-song which no doubt serves the same purpose as the women's grinding songs. The creak of the pulley is an added stimulus to the bullocks and an indispensable part of the whole process. Some friends of ours were once camping near a well, and the continual creak of the pulley so got on the lady's nerves that her husband went over to the well, climbed out on the platform supporting the huge pulley, and oiled the wheel. The stolid farmer gazed at him without comprehension and made no objection, but when he started to drive his bullocks again and discovered that the pulley was silent, he took up a handful of sand and threw it on the wheel to produce the requisite music—and it did!

Just last month, our bearers inform us, a man was killed at this very spot. A rope broke and he was precipitated into the well, striking his head against the stone sides. He was the poorest of the poor, and of course left a wife and numerous children. And there is no workmen's compensation! But our sad thoughts are dispersed when we catch

sight of an urchin by the side of the road. Near the well is a fine sugar-cane grove, and some of the cane must be ready now, for this youngster is ecstatically chewing at one end of a stalk far bigger than himself, with the leafy end of it resting on the ground.

And so, rested and refreshed, we proceed on our journey.

We watch a man ploughing in a field with a team of one bullock and one buffalo unequally yoked together by a primitive wooden yoke, and we picture Abraham on the plains of Mamre. Then we notice, stalking ahead of us, a dignified matronly buffalo with a strange protuberance on her back—a protuberance from which two appendages occasionally emerge and wave and disappear again. As we approach, the mystery resolves itself into a boy lying flat on his stomach along the bony ridge of the buffalo's back and kicking his heels joyfully in the air. As he hears us he sits up and begins to take notice. He hastily straddles his novel steed and guides it to the side of the road to let us pass. Then here comes another rider on another mount—a villager on bullock-back. His earthly possessions are in two bulky bundles balanced on either side of the animal. He himself sits in the middle with his legs uncomfortably stretched towards the face of the bullock, which he steers by means of a rope through its nostrils.

Then we pass a few red-painted stones by the

wayside—a local shrine, and we call to mind the experience of a missionary friend. When out hunting one day he climbed a little hillock and stood on a pile of stones to spy out whether there were any deer in the neighbourhood. He inadvertently dislodged a stone, and it rolled down the slope. He was horrified to notice that it was red-painted and therefore holy, and was thankful that no one had observed him, otherwise there might have been trouble over the sacrilege. Some years later he happened to be back in that particular place and noticed an unfamiliar shrine with a stone inside. He turned to a villager standing near by and asked him about it.

“Why, sahib,” he replied, “didn’t you hear what happened? About three years ago our god must have got angry with us, for he rolled right down the hill and stopped here. We knew from that that he wanted this as his new place to stay, so we built him this little house, and he has been so good to us ever since. The crops have been good, and we haven’t had any special sickness or anything. Isn’t it wonderful?”

And as we ponder on such gods and their ways we notice a grey mass against the glaring blue sky—an Indian village and our goal. We approach it by a lane lined by dusty cactus bushes. We skirt the outcaste quarter with its shabby houses of mud and straw. We turn a corner and are confronted by a substantial stone building. It

really would be more accurate to say that the back of the building confronts us; for here, as sometimes happens in the Emerald Isle, the front of the building is round at the back. So we go round the back of the building to the front, and find a large, verandah-like structure with stone walls, a mud floor, and a mud roof supported by roughly-hewn wooden pillars.

A goodly number of our old friends have already gathered, so we greet them and make our way to the string cot which has been placed for us in a corner. The bottle of raisin water and the loaf of bread are put on the rickety table beside the Bible and hymn-book. Next, an elder rings the bell (by means of a rope fastened to the tongue) which hangs from a cross-beam. The people appear in twos and threes, and salaam to us as they come in. Then the service begins—a simple service for simple people.

The men-folks squat on the floor in front, with their turbans removed and placed beside them. The women crouch at the back of the room, with their faces partly concealed by the loose end of their *saris*. Children swarm everywhere and crawl and tumble noisily about the floor. Cows and bullocks and buffaloes and goats and dogs stroll past the opening or recline on the threshold or even attempt to pay us a visit. None of these trifles disturbs the equanimity of the audience, for they are all so much a part of everyday life.

I look over the company with kindling memories. It is a long time since I was here. Changes have taken place. Some honoured friends are gone. Others are visibly older and weaker. Entirely new babies are of course in evidence—lots of them. . . . I think back over the years of acquaintanceship, of fellowship.

The dusky preacher was more than once beaten because of his religion and like Peter he converted his gaoler—the Brahman Govindrao.

Near him sits a man whose four brothers and sisters, on becoming Christians, were poisoned by their Hindu relatives. He himself, an outcaste of the lowest grade, is now teaching a school for both caste and outcaste pupils in what was once a bigoted village.

That other teacher lost his beautiful wife in the influenza epidemic. He had to dig the grave and bury her all by himself, because no one in the village would touch a Christian corpse.

At the back of the room sits the mealy-mouthed woman who once, on behalf of the Christian community, presented me with a pair of silver bangles, and then stole my hand-mirror as her share of the spoil. I recovered my property by sending a man fifty miles up the line for it, but the woman has never forgiven me for *forgetting* that I gave it to her as *baksheesh!*

And oh, there is Ranubai, sitting at a becomingly modest distance from her husband Razaram. We

first saw Ranubai four years ago when she turned up at the Travellers' Bungalow where we were staying. She was in great distress, having just lost her husband from influenza, and having come to live with her brother. We sympathized suitably, we thought. A month later we happened to visit that same bungalow again, and we found Ranubai and . . . the husband!

"Why, Ranubai," I cried, "what does this mean? You told us your husband had died."

"True, mudumsahib," she replied, "but it was like this. He was lying very ill with the influenza and I was sure he was going to die, so I left him with his sister. But, you see, he has turned up again like a bad penny." And she sighed.

As it transpired on further enquiry, Ranubai and Razaram, having lost their respective spouses seven years previously, had been living "without benefit of clergy." They by and by became Christians, were married in orthodox fashion, and are now respected members of the community.

And now I catch sight of Gyanoba, the old rascal; and a wave of most unholy joy sweeps over me as I note the wretched condition of his wife and children. For there were two wives in this family, the second having been acquired after a false report of the death of the first, who subsequently turned up and demanded her conjugal rights. The amenable man let both wives remain, but one was the Rachel and the other the Leah.

This woman in front of me was the Rachel, and she saw to it in times of scarcity that she and her children got all the food going. It was the Leah who once came to us for advice when we were camping out in the district; and as the husband refused to play up, we had sent her and her six emaciated youngsters by railway to our bungalow, fed and clothed them, and finally sent them on their way rejoicing to a big town where the mother got work in a mill. She is now flourishing and happy, and all her children are well cared for. Her rival, whom I see before me, is shrunken by deficient food and crumpled up by disease, and she leans heavily on a cane. Leah is surely avenged.

As I meditate, the preacher finishes his sermon. The raisin water is poured into two metal cups. The white loaf is crumbled on to a brass platter. Thus the elements are dispensed, in simple, crude fashion; but I think that the One who has promised to be present where two or three are gathered together in His name, is surely there in the midst of His humble followers.

Service over, we distribute the sweetmeats, chat with our friends, and exchange news. And then, home again in the cool of the evening—"home" to the Travellers' Bungalow.

And now, the day's work done, we sit on the verandah watching the wonderful translucent colouring in the Western sky—bands of palest blue and flax and amber and orange and red merging

imperceptibly into each other. Against this background two trees stand out—on the right a bushy *neem* and on the left a tall, tapering sisal plant. Directly between them shines a solitary star. Away to the north a blazing fire indicates where the farmer is guarding his crops from night prowlers, both biped and quadruped. A great flapping and fluttering startles us as a couple of huge bats fly restlessly backwards and forwards. Then they dart towards the sisal plant, seize a branch, hang upside down, swing to and fro like pendulums, then finally close their wings and subside into two motionless black spots on the landscape. From the distance come indistinct composite noises of village life—the beating of drums, the shouts of men and women, the cry of a child, the creak of a bullock cart, the whining of dogs, and, farther off, the howl of a jackal.

It is the same old India. Centuries ago there were the same primitive carts and ploughs, the same castes and outcastes, the same gods and goddesses. For how many more centuries will the old ways prevail? After all, what has been accomplished? What is that handful of Christians three miles off compared to the millions still untouched? Are we tapping in vain against an impregnable fortress?

But the darkness has fallen swiftly. Our sisal plant and our bats and the long road trailing past the bungalow—these fade out in an all-pervading blackness. There is nothing to see on earth now,

so perforce we look up at the sky. Ah, there they are, the candle-lights of heaven twinkling down at us. Surely they are trying to heliograph a message. What is the code? Faith. What is the message? I cannot decipher it. I cannot spell it out. But I think the stars are bidding us look up and not down.

XIII

THROUGH THE FIERY FURNACE

(A HERO TELLS HIS OWN STORY)

“**N**O, I’m not a hero. I’m not even a brave man. I’m just a poor, ignorant, illiterate villager who gave his heart to Jesus and had the privilege of suffering for Him.

“You see, I’m a Mahar, one of the outcastes. I lived all my life in a Native State in India, in a very small village, or rather, outside the village, for, of course, we outcastes are not allowed to live within the walls. Like most of the people of India I was born and brought up a Hindu. I worshipped the monkey-god who sits at the gate of every village, and the red-painted stones in their little shrines. I kept a plant of the sacred *tulsi* [sweet balsam] outside my door, and my women-folks tended it and worshipped it every morning. I enjoyed all the Hindu festivals with their drum-beating and cymbal-clanging and gay processions with shouting and laughing and all sorts of queer ceremonies. Of course we outcastes could not go farther than the door of the temples, for we are outcaste even from the presence of the gods and goddesses of the caste people.

“There were Christians in a group of villages not far from me. They weren’t all good people, and some of them were quite bad; but, on the whole, they were a much better and happier group than we Hindu outcastes. They were almost entirely from the Mangs—the other big section of outcastes, so of course I despised them for that as well as for being Christians. But once in a while I went to their services, and I heard their white sahib tell about the God who wanted people to love Him as if He were a great, kind Father. And it all seemed very wonderful to me, and by and by I began to see how foolish it was to be afraid of bits of wood and stone that other men—human like myself—had made with their own hands. I talked this over with the Christian pastor and asked him many questions, for, you see, I can’t read, so books were of no use to me. As I squatted in the fields weeding, or cutting the grain with my little sickle, or as I drove the herds out to pasture, I would think and think and think. And then, somehow, it all came clear to me that if I wanted peace and happiness I must give my heart to Jesus. I knew there would be trouble, but that didn’t seem to matter so long as I did what I knew to be right. One blessed day the white sahib came and baptised me and my wife and my five children. How happy I was! And I have been happy ever since.

“A few days after the sahib had gone, the trouble began. The *patil* [headman] and the

kulkarni [village recorder] are both against this new religion, for it makes even an outcaste feel self-conscious and independent, and of course no outcaste has any business to think he has a soul or any individuality. It was a marvellous discovery to me that I not only had a soul, but that my soul was precious in God's sight—as precious as that of a caste man.

“One day my wife went as usual into the village to buy oil for the cooking and a handful of salt. She carried the oil in a little earthenware pot and she held the salt in a corner of her *sari*. The *patil's* brother met her. ‘What are you doing here?’ he cried. ‘We don't want dogs of Christians in our village. Get out! And don't dare to show your face inside this village again.’ And with that he knocked the pot out of her hand so that it fell to the ground and broke into a thousand pieces. Then he struck the salt out of her *sari*, and kicked her till she turned and ran home. You can imagine how I felt when she told me, but our Master had suffered more than that, so how could we complain?

“Things were rather hard for us after that. We had to walk six miles to the nearest village for our food supplies. I could get no field work, for the farmers had been forbidden to employ me. We were near starving, but my father and brothers helped us. Then one day I was horrified to discover that I had been deprived of my *Mahar-ki*—

my birthright as a Mahar that gave me a share in the duties and the privileges and the perquisites and the ground of the Mahars. My enemies had bribed the police officer, and he had erased my name from the official records. I was disinherited—a nobody, not even an outcaste! It was a severe blow, and entirely unexpected, but our Master had suffered more than this, so how could we complain?

“Then the villagers began to tell me that they would kill me and my family—that, if necessary, they would burn me out. They simply did not want any Christians in their village and they weren’t going to have us stay. Sahib urged us to go away for a time until the opposition should die down, and promised me work and protection beside him in Barispoor, but I felt that Jesus wanted us to stay right on there, so we did.

“One midnight as we were sleeping in our little one-roomed mud house I was awakened by a strange smell, and on jumping up discovered that the roof was on fire. It was made of dried sugarcane stalks, and you could never believe how the fire could eat it up. I yelled and wakened my wife and my five children, and we rushed to the door. *But the door was fastened from the outside!*

“We were caught like rats in a burning trap. The flames were dipping down towards us as they rushed all over the thatch roof roaring and spitting. There was no hope through the window, for

it was only eight inches square. Oh, my God, have my wife and my five children and I to be burned up alive? Oh, my God, why don't my brothers come and help us? My brothers had heard our cries and rushed to their doors. *But my brothers' doors were also fastened from the outside!* The iron chain on the door had been put over the iron loop on the door-frame, and no amount of pulling or pushing would loosen it. I was ready to die for Jesus. But oh, what a death!—to be roasted alive in my own little home! And my wife and my five children! Oh, my God, save at least *them!*

“Our door suddenly began to rattle. It yielded. It was pulled partly open. I threw my five children out, one by one, pushed through my screaming wife, and then followed. There was my old deaf father waiting for us. He had happened to be sleeping outside that night, and when my enemies came and fastened my door and my brothers' doors from the outside, they never noticed him. It had taken some time for our cries to waken him, for he is as deaf as a doorpost; but when he saw what had happened he tore at the chain till it loosened, though his hands were all burned with the falling thatch. But now we were out and safe—I and my wife and my five children.

“Then I wondered if we couldn't save our most precious possession. We had no silver or gold or jewels, but we had a doorframe, which we had bought after much pinching and scraping when we

built our new house. We opened my brothers' doors, and they and I tore a hole in the mud wall of my house and managed to loosen the doorframe and haul it out. It was the only thing saved. One outsider—a potter who happened to be visiting the village—was the only person who helped us. At a safe distance stood a group of villagers, *laughing and enjoying the fun!*

“I had strange thoughts as I stood trembling with one of my children in my arms, watching our little new house burn down and with it everything I possessed on earth except the doorframe—some clothes, a few cooking vessels, and a store of grain. But God in His mercy had spared our lives, and for that I was extremely thankful. Besides, our Master had suffered more than that, so how should we complain?

“Sahib had most unexpectedly arrived the night before at the Travellers' Bungalow five miles away, so I ran over in the early morning, and he came back with me and saw the still-smouldering ruins. He went at once to the *patil* and bearded him in his den and told him he was directly responsible for this and would be made to suffer for it. Then sahib suggested that we hold the service here to-day—for it was the holy Sabbath—instead of in the little Christian church three miles off. So he sent round messengers to the different villages to call the Christians together; and in the afternoon we all gathered and worshipped and praised God

right there by the ruins of my little house. And somehow I felt so happy, for I had come safely through the fiery furnace—I and my wife and my five children, and God had been good to us.

“Next day sahib and I went to the headquarters of the district, thirty-five miles away, and saw the head official of the whole district. He is a Mohammedan and seemed very indignant over the affair. He took a full report and promised that justice would be done, so I went back to my village.

“A few days later a police officer came to make enquiries. I think the *patil* had bribed him, for he made fun of everything I said. But I kept my temper and just said that I had given my heart to Jesus and that nothing else mattered. By and by he got angry and said I was telling lies about the number of things that had been burned up in my house; so he took a stick and beat me all over my body and kept me in custody all day as though I had been the criminal. I figured it all out that there was evidently no chance of justice under this officer and that the best thing would be to escape if possible. So when darkness fell and my guard wasn't watching I slipped away into the black night out of reach.

“I ran and I ran and I ran, though my whole body was aching from the beating. I ran four miles to the village where there was a Christian teacher. He advised me to go right to sahib and scraped together enough money for my railway

fare; so I ran on another eight miles so as to reach a station where the police would not be watching for me, and I took the train for eighty-five miles to where sahib was. And when he came out of his bungalow to meet me, I just fell on his breast and cried my heart out. You see, I'm no hero. I'm not even a brave man. I cried just like a baby, for it all rushed over me again—that awful time when I and my wife and my five children crouched in the burning house—*shut in!*

“Sahib's eyes glinted very fiercely when he heard the way the police officer had behaved, and I knew that he would get justice for me. I was very apprehensive as to what might be happening to my family after I had run away, so next day sahib sent a big strong man to bring my wife and my five children and also my old father. And they told me just what I had expected. When the brutal police officer heard I had run away he sent for my wife and questioned her; and when she said she knew nothing about my escape he seized her by the hair and threw her down on the ground and tramped on her and kicked her. Then he beat my old father and my youngest brother.

“But what does it matter now? My wife and my five children are safe with me, and we are staying under sahib's protection until things quieten down in my village. But, you know, God is using all this trouble to turn other people to Him. In my own village alone nine other Mahars are beg-

ging for baptism, and I am so glad, for I want them to be as happy as I have been since I gave my heart to Jesus."

That is the story of the heroic Laxman as he tells it himself, squatting on the floor, with his hands clasped in front of him and with great tears rolling down his cheeks as he relives the experience in the burning house.

But that is not the end of the story.

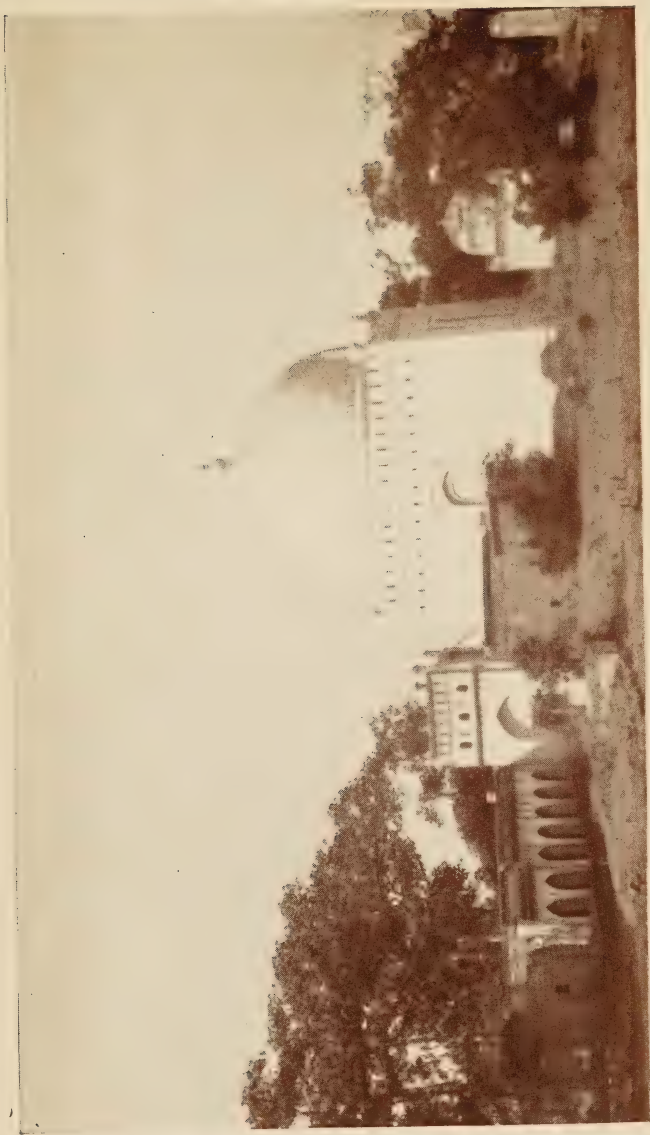
Even if poor Laxman had been perfectly content to spend the rest of his life away from his village, Bill had no intention of letting an outrage like that pass unpunished. We knew that our whole district was watching to see what would happen. If Laxman were not avenged, then other Hindus in other villages would think they could treat the Christians in the same way, and would burn them out and get rid of them with impunity. So Bill once more went to the headquarters of the district, saw the officials, and followed up his visit with more than one urgent letter. We did not expect any immediate effect, for we knew, from many a hard experience, that even the simplest case may take months or even years to get into court. But we did get a shock when a summons came to Laxman to appear at headquarters and answer a charge brought by the *patil* of his village that he, Laxman, had maliciously set his own house on fire and then accused the villagers!

The charge was simply preposterous—so ludicrous as to be laughable in ordinary circumstances. But these were not ordinary circumstances. We were dealing with a Native State which the long arm of British justice cannot touch, where bribery and corruption are rife, and where palms are peculiarly responsive to grease. The *patil* was a rich man with a reputation and position to lose, while Laxman was a poor outcaste who had not a cent with which to make his way smooth for him.

Laxman was thrown into the greatest perturbation when he got the summons. This was the hardest blow yet—to suffer as he had done and then be summoned to answer a criminal charge. He refused at first to move. He insisted on hiding somewhere in British Territory. But Bill's blood was up. He vowed he would see this thing through no matter to what extremities he might have to go.

So we despatched poor, terror-stricken Laxman directly, with a letter saying that the Rev. William Wilberforce would follow the next day, while we went round by several villages and picked up the Christian pastor—a very clever and diplomatic man who knows not a little about the tricks of the trade in the law courts. We reached headquarters on the morning of the day fixed for the trial. I stayed in the 'Travellers' Bungalow, and watched Bill and the pastor go off to the court with some trepidation.

Hour after hour passed. I never worry, but I



AN OLD AND BEAUTIFUL MOSQUE IN OUR PARISH.

began to get apprehensive. I thought of all poor Laxman had suggested in the way of possible poison and other means of getting rid of anybody obstreperous. I felt sure that if things had gone all right, Bill would have been back long before this. A Native State often resents any white man's "interference." Poor Bill! Maybe he was having a bad time too.

About five o'clock in the afternoon I heard a sudden "toot-toot" and rushed to the door in time to see our Ford swing round from the main road. In it were Bill and the pastor and Laxman, and I could see even from that distance that they were all grinning from ear to ear. "How did it come out?" I cried. "What about Laxman?" "Everything's all right," shouted Bill, "wait and we'll tell you."

But when they got into the bungalow they were too excited to speak intelligibly. We all four sat down to a tardy tea. Poor old Laxman, who had never sat on a chair or taken a meal at a table before, choked and spluttered and laughed outright as he tried to tell me what had happened. Then the pastor would break in with his version, and Bill would interrupt to tell some tit-bit, and very often the three were all speaking at once. It was with difficulty that I pieced the tale together.

When Bill and the pastor went along to the courts they were sidetracked into the house of the chief official—a polished Mohammedan gentleman—as

most of the high-up officials are. They were treated to innumerable cups of tea, and their host kept them chatting pleasantly for hours on every subject under the sun except the matter in hand. The case must meanwhile be going on in the court, and Bill wondered how things were going. When Bill got an opportunity he related Laxman's story and showed how preposterous the charge was, but his host did not seem to be greatly interested, and Bill felt sure that he knew what the verdict was to be. This naturally made him a little anxious.

In the late afternoon, the official casually remarked that he would now call Laxman and tell him the verdict. Laxman appeared and stood by the door, as white as any brown man can be. The judgment was that the charge against Laxman was dismissed, and that the *patil* was ordered to have Laxman's house rebuilt free of charge! And then the official informed Bill that the brutal police officer who had maltreated them was transferred to another post far away, and that a new officer—a college friend of his own son—had been appointed in his place, with special instructions to protect and help the Christians!

The news had spread like wildfire through our district. *Patils* and other officials may dislike the Christians but they will not persecute them with impunity. And the poor outcastes—both Christian and Hindu, feel that a new day of justice is dawning for them.

XIV

FURLOUGH!

CLANG and clatter! Rush and roar!
Swish and swirl!

Bill and I stood, as breathless with excitement as any country cousins, on the edge of the curb in Lexington Avenue, New York. Could we, dare we step across? We did. But we had miscalculated. A great, bellowing motor-truck suddenly loomed out of nowhere and bore down upon us! Bill grasped my hand and drew me to the right. With the instinct of years in India I pulled to the left. Being strong-minded, neither of us would let go. And there we danced in the middle of the road like a couple of idiotic marionettes pulled by unseen strings. I glanced at the face of the truck-driver. His expression changed from annoyance to amusement, and he actually chuckled as he considerably slowed down and watched us scamper like frightened rabbits in front of his motor and over to the safe shelter of the inviting sidewalk.

Our first day back in New York! Our first ice-cream soda! I'll never forget them.

The Grand Central Station was absolutely over-

powering, and we felt like dwarfs in the hall of the giants. And the trains all out of sight! Why, in dear little old Barispoor the whole town used to watch for the morning train careering gaily across the main thoroughfare, and we had plenty time to catch it if we left the bungalow after the whistle blew. And if we happened to be delayed, all we had to do was to send a man running to hold up the train for us, for we were usually the only white passengers. But here were hundreds and hundreds of white sahibs strolling round and looking at their watches or at the big clock in the hall; and the trains were running to schedule whether we wanted to go by them or not!

And that ice-cream soda at one of the station fountains! If you want to know how it tasted, you will have to deny yourself for seven-and-a-half thirsty years.

Well, here we are, really in America at last. How often, under the fragrant trees in the moonlit garden in Barispoor, we had rested in the evenings and planned all the wonderful things we would do during furlough. As a matter of fact, it was usually I who built the castles in the air. We would start out enthusiastically, both of us, and then after I had talked for a while and made some brilliant suggestion about furlough, I would ask Bill's opinion. Dead silence! Then I would discover that Bill, stretched out in his steamer-chair and exhausted after his day's labours, was sound

asleep! And sometimes my flow of suggestions would be rudely interrupted by audible signs of his somnolence. But at odd moments during the last four years, this coming holiday had loomed on our horizon and summoned up entrancing visions of all we would see and do. And here we were, almost stunned by the fact that our Indian parish, with all its perplexities and problems, is, say, eight thousand miles away!

Somehow, we had anticipated furlough as a time of vegetation; but it turns out to be a hectic round of strenuous living—so hectic that we sometimes look forward to getting back to work so as to rest up a bit! The Rev. William Wilberforce preaches numerous sermons both in town and country churches, and I never look up at him in the dignity of pulpit environment and ministerial garb confronting a well-dressed audience without picturing him in camping outfit, sitting on a string cot in the dirtiest quarter of a dirty Indian village, surrounded by a crowd of ragged but eager brown folks. Sometimes we have the privilege of going off together for week-ends, and talking in churches, Sunday schools, Christian Endeavour societies and various clubs or committees.

It is difficult to sum up the multifarious impressions left by multifarious experiences, but the sum total is one of pleasure and inspiration, and the unbounded hospitality of American homes is a vivid memory. We are struck by the genuine and in-

telligent interest in missionary work, and never cease to marvel at the extended network of societies with the one object of keeping our enterprise a live and going concern. It gives us a great glow of encouragement to realize that we are part and parcel of one of the biggest movements on earth, with a fine body of American men and women back of us; for in our isolated life at Baris-poor we had often felt that ours was a little one-horse show not very vitally linked up with world affairs.

Of course we have had amusing examples of twisted ideas of our life and work—for instance, when we were asked in all seriousness whether we enjoyed living on rice and dressing “like the natives?”

On another occasion an enthusiastic young lady, leader of a Junior Christian Endeavour Society, got me to speak to her boys and girls, and when chatting with me afterwards remarked, “We’re awfully interested in what you’ve told us, Mrs. Wilberforce; in fact, we’re interested in *all* mission work. But of course we concentrate on our *own* missionary.”

“Naturally,” said I. “Who is she?”

“Miss Blank.”

“And which country is she in? India, too?”

My eager young friend looked nonplussed for a moment. “No, I think it’s Africa. Wait a minute. No, I do believe it’s China. Johnny,” she

called to one of her ardent boys, " isn't Miss Blank in China?" Johnny looked equally uncertain, but *thought* she was.

Now, how many times had those lively boys and girls looked up the location of *their* missionary, how many letters had they written her, when they did not so much as know the country she was working in? I felt that their sprightly leader missed a great opportunity of imparting both geographical and world knowledge to her Endeavourers, to say nothing of cheering up *their* missionary by an occasional message.

We have invariably found that the churches which are lukewarm in their interest and behind in their contributions are those which are not linked up with an individual missionary with whom they can have personal contacts. We were asked to speak in a church which had not given a cent to missions for years. One of the members said to me, " This year I was asked how much I'd pledge for Foreign Missions. I agreed to give ten dollars. But I'm not in the least interested, for I don't know where that ten dollars is going. Now, if our church had charge of a bed in a Chinese hospital, or a school in India, or any one definite bit of work like that, I'd give gladly, and I'd give more—double or treble. What I want, is to *follow the dollar.*"

I often thought of that remark and found it literally true; for wherever a church or a society

is linked up with an individual missionary or an individual bit of work, interest is alive and intelligent. And I know from our own personal experience the inspiration that comes to a missionary when he knows he has a strong and wideawake bunch of friends back of him.

We have come across cases that would be ludicrous if they were not so pathetic—sometimes pernicious—cases of absolute ignorance as to conditions in India coupled with a lack of sufficient imagination to realize them when they are described. The worst case of this kind that I met was when I tried to increase my medical knowledge.

One of the things I had made up my mind to do on furlough was to get in touch with some hospital that would let me pick up what knowledge I could, so as to be able to cope with at least simple cases in our huge district. When I saw the multiplicity of hospitals and doctors and nurses in our civilized America, my heart just ached for poor old India with her vast stretches of thousands of miles without any medical aid and its millions who die every year from preventable causes; and I pictured the revolution that the advent of just one doctor would make in our immediate parish. There was no time for any extended medical course, but I did think that there must be some way of spending a few months in the observation of treatments, so that I could at least relieve pain.

My first attempt at finding a suitable opportunity was disastrous. Armed with an introduction and an explanation from a Secretary of our Board, I proceeded to the social service worker connected with a large free dispensary in one of America's busy cities. When I saw the crowds of out-patients, my hopes rose high, for it reminded me of the sick and the blind and the halt that used to flock to us for relief. If I could only sit by some doctor as he diagnosed these cases, and get from him some simple remedies, I knew that I could help thousands of suffering Indians who would otherwise go unrelieved.

The social service worker was a most efficient young person who evidently called a spade a spade and took life literally. She first looked me over from top to toe and then read the letter of introduction. I could feel her positively bristle with disapprobation. She looked at me again with piercing grey eyes.

"But I understand," she said, "that you are not a fully qualified medical practitioner."

The meek missionary assured her that she was not.

EFFICIENT YOUNG PERSON: "And you actually plan to diagnose cases and give out medicines?"

MEEK MISSIONARY: "By all means."

E. Y. P.: "It is extraordinary! In fact, most dangerous."

M. M.: "Have *you* never done so?"

E. Y. P.: "Never! My assistants and I go from house to house and when we find sick people we either urge them to come here to the dispensary or then we send them a doctor."

M. M.: "Exactly. That is the right thing to do here in a large city with hundreds of doctors. But I'm afraid you don't understand that I'm going back to India—to a district where there are twenty thousand square miles without a hospital, and two and a half million people beyond medical relief."

The Meek Missionary paused here, feeling that she had made a decided hit, but the unblinking grey eyes continued to pierce her without a flicker of imagination. Evidently all that the Efficient Young Person could realize was the fact that an unqualified charlatan wanted to creep by a back door into medical practice, and that she herself was the Heaven-sent Obstacle to keep her out. She hung on to this fact with so much tenacity that her mind could grasp nothing else. The Meek Missionary followed up her point. "Suppose," she said, "you found yourself in a place where there was no one else to help, would you not give out simple medicines?"

E. Y. P.: "May I ask if you ever did so before you returned to America?"

M. M.: "Often."

E. Y. P.: "And with what after-effects?"

M. M.: "Only these—many lives have been saved and hundreds of sufferers relieved."

E. Y. P.: "And how many casualties due to your treatments?"

M. M.: "Not one."

But the Efficient Young Person was by no means exhausted. She had a brilliant brain-wave. "Then," she announced, "what you really want is a course in home nursing. We have an excellent class about to begin. I shall be happy to enroll you," and she stretched her hand towards a pile of enrollment forms. The Meek Missionary hastened to explain that she had "home-nursed" from her youth upwards, and that an elaborate knowledge of how to turn a bed and adjust the ventilation was not quite the thing needed among a people of no beds and no ventilation—where the patient simply rolled himself in a blanket and slept on a mud floor in a windowless room. And then she pointed—dramatically, as she fondly thought—to a long line of waiting out-patients, and said that all she wanted was to sit by some doctor as he diagnosed cases, and get from him some simple prescriptions. Just a little knowledge, she pleaded, would work miracles in her needy district. But the Efficient Young Person had her trump card up her sleeve and she produced it now with an air of triumphant finality. "Madam," she said, "I can do nothing whatever for you. You do not seem to realize that '*a little knowledge is a dangerous thing*'!"

The Meek Missionary was completely van-

quished. She said a hurried "good-morning" and fled!

Later on, more imaginative officials helped me to imbibe some elementary knowledge in a large institution, which I have no doubt will prove immensely helpful later on; and a busy dentist used up hours of his valuable time giving us an idea of rudimentary dentistry, especially the art of pulling teeth.

In other ways, too, the furlough has been immensely worth while. Bill and I feel that our minds have undergone a thorough spring-cleaning, and our outlook is freshened and expanded immeasurably. Our dilapidated wardrobe has been replenished, and our mailing list of real or hypothetical friends has swelled to several hundreds. We have also become acutely sympathetic with the trials and troubles of our Mission Board, and we congratulate ourselves on being merely overworked missionaries in a remote corner of the globe, and not harassed Secretaries at the Home Base.

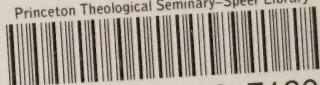
Yes, we have enjoyed every minute. We have dropped back into where we belong and have begun to feel at home again in the old familiar environment. But something is tugging at our subconscious minds all the time; something is pulling at our heart-strings. The great rolling prairies of Western India; the thirsty, barren land; the gorgeous tropical sunsets; the camping out under the wide and starry sky; our fragrant garden in the

moonlight; the poor outcastes who have no helper but ourselves; and—last but not least—our beloved friend Krishna the cook and our adorable doggie Fuzzle—these are all calling to us to come over again to them and love them, and we are actually beginning to count the hours till we shall once more step within the bounds of our Indian parish, thousands of miles away.

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Our parish in India; lights and shadows

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